

TWELVE
SERMONS,

ON

FAITH & MORALS:

BY

THE REV. JOHN PEARSON, A. B.

LATE OF

EXETER COLLEGE,

Oxford:

CHAPLAIN TO HIS MAJESTY'S SHIP FAMILIES.

Periport,

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TWELVE

SERMONS

MILTON C. MORRIS



THE REV. A. B.

DATE OF

EXETER COLLEGE

CHURCH

CHURCHMAN TO HIS MASTER'S CHURCH

NOTED

DATE OF NIGHT

RECEIVED AND FORWARDED BY J. ALBION

15/4/46

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TO THE PUBLIC.

THE following sermons owe their appearance before the public eye, not to ambition for *theological laurels*, but “in simple sadness” to remove the distresses of a family by no means small.

The author submits them to the candour of the public and his friends, with all humility. He cannot but be sensible of their defects, many of which originate for want of time for revision, therefore they are printed as they were delivered from the pulpit. They are not written for the eye of criticism, upon which account he hopes the errors in them will be overlooked by the public, and particularly by those who have already patronised him.

They are designed to lead men to an examination of the heart—for awakening sinners—for the encouragement of every true christian:—and are calculated to recommend christianity to the belief of all men, by bringing its truth to the test of their own consciences and feelings.

As it is to the kind solicitude of his friends for the welfare of his family, and from a persuasion which they entertained that these sermons might be more extensively useful were they published; (arguing justly, that sermons founded on the gospel plan, would, in a plain

natural dress, have a happy tendency to promote the great interests of religion and morality) He says it is to these benevolent suggestions that they owe their existence: so—to their kind consideration he submits himself, whose condescending aid he has already experienced, and hopes for a continuance of the same. He cannot omit this opportunity of returning his thanks to every one who have benevolently given their good wishes to his undertaking, and farther begs their future favours with intimation of such ladies and gentlemen as desire to have the work, addressed to him at Kingston Cross near Portsmouth, or to the publisher.

He concludes with wishing every reader of his publication, health and happiness; and to his bountiful subscribers in particular.

He returns cordial thanks for all favours shewn him, and shall ever recollect them with respect and gratitude; and may the Almighty Father, the God of benevolence, the friend of the destitute, the relief of the distressed, the support under affliction, the rewarder of patience, grant them—*so to read as inwardly to digest,* is the prayer of

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JOHN PEARSON.

April 6, 1797.

SERMON I.

ON THE SACRAMENT.

I COR. xi. 24.

This do in Remembrance of me.

v. 25. *This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*

THERE is no one place of scripture, no one context in the whole bible, that doth so fully treat of and expresse the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, and our duty in relation to it, as doth this chapter.

The Apostle reproves the Corinthians, like a faithful pastor, for their foul disorders, indecencies, and abuses of this sacrament; for the remedying of which, he repeats to them the primitive institution of it, and our Saviour's strict command, *Do this in remembrance of me.* From which words I propose to shew—

The matter or object of our remembrance in this sacrament.

The manner of it; viz. how we must perform and manage this commemoration of Christ and his death.

And to conclude with a few inferences.

And first—The Lord Jesus being to lay down his life, and depart out of this world, bequeaths this ordinance to his church, as the token and pledge of his dearest affection and memorial of himself: Like a loving dying husband, that should leave to his beloved surviving spouse, some ring, jewel, picture, or other precious thing, and charge

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her for his sake to keep and wear it, and look often upon it, to preserve the thoughts of his memory fresh, vigorous and lively upon her mind. And as a loving and loyal wife, would surely put the highest estimate and value upon such a gift and remaining legacy of her deceased husband, and preserve it charily and constantly in obedience to his last request and desires—so should all christians most highly esteem and value this ordinance, and often solemnize it to the remembrance of their dearest Saviour and Redeemer; being his last will and appointment. But to speak more fully to this point, two things offer themselves to our consideration in the explication of it.

I. The matter or object of this remembrance.

The object of these sacred mysteries, is, the Lord Jesus Christ; who is the kernel and substance of all sacraments, and the whole covenant of grace. *Do this in remembrance of me.* But though the person of Christ be, as I may say, the total and adequate subject, yet the principal and more special subject of this commemoration, is his passion; as the Apostle presently after expounds it; applying it peculiarly to the death of Christ; saying, *That it is a shewing forth of his death till he come.*

So then, we are, in the celebration of this sacrament, to remember Christ as dying, bleeding, crucified for us. We must not solemnize this sacrament for its own sake, nor think that God will be pleased, or our souls edified in grace, by the *opus operatum*, the bare outward, carnal observation; but we must, together with the outward solemnity, have a cordial respect to our crucified Saviour. We must look beyond the outward visible

visible elements and ceremonies of the Sacrament, and see him by faith who is invisible, even Christ and his benefits. All the desires of our souls should be towards him, and the remembrance of his name. More particularly in the serious consideration of the death of Christ, and devout remembrance of his passion, let us endeavour to meditate and fix our minds distinctly, especially upon these things—

1. The bitterness of his death and passion: which was indeed, heavy and terrible, beyond all expression or apprehension. This was foretold by the Prophets, that he should suffer grievous torments. He was described by them as a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief. How dreadful were those sufferings which the histories of the holy Evangelists do represent to, and assure us of, in the breakings, and woundings, and scourges, and crowning, and piercings of his body; besides the shame and pain of his cruel, ignominious, and accursed death which he suffered! And yet, if we consider and rightly understand the nature of his inward sorrows, and the agonies of his soul, we shall find his sufferings much more aggravated. For the passion of his soul, was the soul of his passion. He was amazed with fear and encompassed with sorrow, the most tormentful passions. The pangs of death compassed him, and the pains of Hell gat hold upon him: and no wonder, for he conflicted and struggled with the wrath of God, and the terrors of Hell. The weight and burden of his Father's wrath against our sins, which he took upon him by imputation, so heavily oppressed his soul—This was the sting of his punishment; that which made the cup so bitter, and that made

him so earnestly to deprecate it. A burden too heavy for the strongest angel to bear; which would have crushed him into nothing, or sunk him into Hell: for it made him, who was God as well as man, sanctified with the Spirit, supported with the Deity, comforted by angels, sweat such a sweat, as never man sweat, drops of blood; and that when he was alone, and no hand touched him, but his own thoughts and the expectation of what he was to suffer.

2. The outward impulsive cause of his passion: viz. our sins, &c. That he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our sins, were the cause of his sufferings; the nails which fastened him to the cross; the spear which pierced his side. He was made a sin-offering for us. He was cut off; but not for himself. No! for he knew no sin. He suffered not as an evil doer, but for us who were the evil doers. Thus we should consider Christ's Death conjunctly with our sins, for which he suffered and died.

3. The inward moving cause: viz. his own love. Greater love than this hath no man; that a man lay down his life for his friend:—But herein appears the admirable love of Christ, that he laid down his life for his enemies; sinners. It was the love of Christ which constrained him to suffer. His love to miserable sinners was stronger than death.—When you come then, to this Sacrament, forget not the love of your Redeemer, that prevailed with him to die, that you might live; to suffer the pains of death and undergo the burden of infinite wrath, that he might ransom and deliver you from that miserable estate, wherein

your

your sins held you; making you liable to eternal damnation. Forget not the love of Christ, who so loved you, and gave himself for you; who loved you, and washed you in his blood.

4. The effects and benefits of his death. For Christ's death was not only exemplary, but also beneficial to us. Indeed he suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps: to teach us with patience and constancy to bear the wrongs and injuries of an evil world.— But this was not the only end of his death, to be an example to us—but to purchase several rare and admirable benefits for us, the meritorious effects of his sufferings: as, the forgiveness of sins, and reconciliation to God, the sanctification of our hearts, and lives, and everlasting life and glory. We should then remember, that this Sacrament is not only a sign, or representation of Christ's sufferings, but also, a seal, or confirmation of the precious benefits thereby procured to us; as—

1. Remission of sins, and reconciliation to God. When we see the bread broken, and take and eat it, we must remember, not only the bitter death of Christ, but also the precious fruit of it, the satisfaction of Divine justice for our sins: and so, when we take the cup and drink it, we must not only remember that Christ shed his blood, but also, the end and effect of it, for the remission of sins. Remember, that Christ's death was a ransom for thy sins. He died unto sin. Rom. vi. 10. Not as believers are said to die unto sin, to cease from sin, but to expiate sin, and take away iniquity. Remember, that we are reconciled to God, by the death of Christ. He suffered for our sins, that,
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by removing of them, he might bring us to God. The chastisement of our peace was upon him.

2. Sanctification of our hearts and lives. As Christ gave himself to redeem us from all iniquity, so also, to purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. The influence and effect of his death, is not to be restrained only to the removal of sin, in its punishment, but it reaches also, to the subduing of sin in its power. He gave himself for his church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it. That he might sanctify the people with his own blood, he suffered without the gate. Remember then, that the body of Christ is broken *for* you, to destroy the body of sin *in* you; and that his blood is shed for you, to wash away the filth of sin from your souls; that *he* died to sin, that *you* might live to righteousness.

3. Redemption to eternal life and glory. The everlasting life and glory of his people, was the end and purchase of Christ's death and sufferings. He was lifted up upon the cross, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. He suffered for us, that we might reign with him. He suffered death, the wages of our sins, that he might procure us the gift of God, eternal life. Remember then, when you take the bread, that living bread which came down from Heaven, of which, he that eateth shall live for ever.

And thus much for the matter or object of our remembrance in this Sacrament.

Now followeth the manner of it; how we must perform

perform and manage this commemoration of Christ and his death.

Now this consists in a serious inward affectionate meditation, and distinct application of the person of Christ and his passion, with relation to those several particulars before mentioned; viz. the nature of his death, and the motives of it; our great misery, and his greater mercy, and the gracious glorious ends and effects of it; and in the exercise of inimitable graces. So that we are to remember Christ and his death in this Sacrament, not only with a dogmatical remembrance resting in the speculation or a general assent, but also, with a practical, applicative, energetical remembrance that may influence and work upon the affections, and engage our souls in the exercise and employment of suitable graces and duties.

Observe we then, these several properties of this our commemoration of Christ and his benefits.

1. It must be a faithful remembrance, or remembrance of *faith*. And to this end, to excite our faith, are those select gospel texts prescribed to be read in the office of the Communion.—*Come unto me, all that travel and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.—So God loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.—This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world, to save sinners. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.* We should actuate and exercise our faith in this ordinance, wherein as it were, before our eyes, Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified

cified for us. Behold him though not his corporeal presence visible to the eye of sense, yet really and spiritually present with an eye of faith, which is the evidence of things not seen. The weakness of our faith is very much helped by these sensible signs: For our spirits being so immersed in matter, and conversant about corporeal objects, and less able to discern spiritual things, things remote from sense; therefore God is pleased for the assisting and strengthening of our faith, to appoint such sensible signs and symbolical actions, to be as mediums to convey such spiritual benefits to our faith and apprehensions.

Christ was promised, and his sufferings prefigured before his coming, by sensible types and figures, in sacrifices, &c. In his passion, his natural body was visibly offered up on the cross, which now, after his ascension, is, according to his institution, represented in the visible signs of bread and wine, in the sacramental actions of this ordinance.

Now since Christ thus graciously condescends to our capacities, to improve our dull apprehensions, and memories, by such connatural objects and sensible helps, let us stir up our faith in this sacramental commemoration, and fix our eyes upon Christ and him crucified; and our hearts too, by a confidential remembrance of his sufferings. Consider and believe his might and mercy, his power and ability, and his willingness and readiness to save us in particular. When thou seest the bread broken, set faith on work, and look on Christ, his body broken and wounded for thy transgressions; and let thy soul, like the dove,
make

make her nest, in the dells of this rock, the wounds of thy blessed Redeemer.

When thou seest the wine poured out, act with faith, and apply the blood of Christ to thy soul, that reconciling, that justifying, that pacifying, that pardoning, that sanctifying, that purging, that cleansing mortifying blood, that speaks better things than that of Abel. Take that bread and feed on it by faith, to the spiritual sprinkling of thy heart: Drink that cup to make it spiritually chearful. Open thy mouth wide in the exercise of faith, and Christ will fill it. Open the gates of faith, the everlasting doors of your souls, and the king of glory will come in. This is the mouth of the soul, by which it feeds upon Christ, sacramentally exhibited in the elements of bread and wine, by which it eats his bread and drinks his blood. This is, as it were, the digesting faculty of the soul, working so effectually, that Christ becomes our spiritual nourishment, and we are made by it, flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bones. The ordinances and elements are dead things, without the spirit of faith: This animates and enlivens them; and makes them beneficial. What is it to believe that Christ died without an applicatory faith to the remission of thy sins? The devils believe so much and yet tremble. No: in this lies the comfort of the remembrance of Christ's death, and the fruit of this holy ordinance, in the fiducial recumbence of the soul upon Christ, and the particular application of the purchase of his death, in the effects and benefits thereof. So then; remember Christ in this sacrament, by a lively faith, and thou wilt experience the comfort of it. Fix

then your eye of faith, on this brazen serpent lifted up on the cross, to cure the fiery stings of sin in your souls.

2. Our remembrance of the Death of Christ must be a remembrance of repentance. It must be attended with hearty sorrow for our sins, the cause of it, and entire hatred of, and indignation and resolution against them.

3. We should mourn in our remembrance.

The very elements and stars shewed compassion when he suffered; and should not we, for whom only he suffered? We should surely look upon Christ, as bearing our sins upon the tree, and dying for our offences. And our eyes should affect our hearts with contrition and sorrow. When we look upon him whom we have pierced, we should mourn and be in bitterness, as one in bitterness for his first-born. We should remember, together with the death of Christ, our sins which were the sad cause of it; and then pour out our souls in us, shedding tears for those sins, for which he shed his blood. And to this purpose is designed that pathetic general confession, ordered to be used in the communion office. Our souls should be heavenly afflicted, when we remember how he was afflicted, and his soul heavy to the death. Again

4. As we should thus lament for our sins, by which we have slain the Lord of Life, so should we loath, detest, and resolve to crucify them that have so provoked God and crucified our dearest Redeemer. When Cæsar's bloody robe was brought into the forum, or place of public concourse, the remembrance of his cruel death was thereby so refreshed upon the memories of the people,

people, and did so affect their hearts with grief and indignation, that, being incensed with fury, they attempted to set on fire the houses of his conspirators and murderers—And should not then the pious remembrance of our Saviour's most bitter death for our sins, as effectually work upon our hearts, to provoke us to just indignation and revenge, upon those his bloody enemies that murdered him? O let us, remembering the death of Christ, abhor the deceitful pleasures of sin, which made him drink that bitter cup of wrath, even to the dregs. Let us stab the wicked lusts of our hearts, that stabbed him to the heart. The death of Christ for our sins, is the most powerful motive to repentance; to sorrow for sin and hatred of it. Let us then, always bear about with us in our hearts and meditations, the dying of the Lord Jesus; but especially, when we come to the Lord's Table, where we are to shew forth the Lord's death occasioned by our sins.

3. It must be a remembrance of love and desire. Love hath a magnetic virtue to attract any ingenuous soul. The remembrance therefore of the infinite love of Christ, in dying for us that we might live through him; in enduring the heavy punishment of our iniquities, that we might enjoy the happy fruits of his merits, cannot choose but provoke returns of love, from every gracious ingenuous heart: that they should love him, because he first loved them. Our Lord Jesus Christ, to testify his love to us, hath given his body and blood to be eaten and drunk by us, by faith, that he might live and dwell in us, and we in him. Let us then, by a fervent remembrance of love to
him

him dying for us, stir up our spiritual appetites to receive his body and blood in this sacrament; so to arrive at a most intimate union, which love always breathes after. The death of Christ, as it was precious in the worth and value of it, and efficacious in the procuring of our redemption; so should it be precious to us, in our esteem and remembrance: It should draw forth our love to him, which will beget desires and breathings after him, and longings to have spiritual gracious communion with him here, and immediate glorious fruition of him hereafter.

4. It should be a joyful remembrance.

We should have mixt affections in this ordinance. As we should, in remembrance of Christ's Death, exercise *sorrow* for our sins, the *deserved cause of it*—so we should excite our *joy* for our redemption, the *deserved effect of it*. Surely, did we well understand the purchase of Christ's death, the mercy of our redemption, the remembrance of it would fill us with joy unspeakable. Did we taste the sweetness of this mercy, we should rejoice in the commemoration of Christ's death on this account; and when we eat his flesh and drink his blood, our souls should be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. Again,

5. It must be a remembrance of thankfulness.

As we must rejoice in our redemption, so must we be thankful to our redeemer. We must magnify God for the benefit of his son, and the fruit thereof communicated to us, and praise his holy name. Whatsoever considerations have a just tendency to provoke thankfulness, they meet together in the due commemoration of Christ's death, and enforce

enforce it upon us. Whether we consider the greatness of our misery, from which we were delivered by it, the greatest of evils, sin, and hell; or, the greatness of the benefits obtained by it, righteousness and eternal life; or the dignity of our redeemer, the glorious excellency of his person, the son of God and brightness of his father's glory, clothed with robes of holiness and majesty; or, the manner and measure of his sufferings, humbling himself even to the death at the cross; or, lastly, what vile wretched unworthy creatures we are, for whom he gave himself to death: In all these regards we have infinite cause of everlasting thankfulness. Let us then remember Christ's death with hearty praise and thanksgiving. The grace of thankfulness is singularly useful in this holy sacrament, and may by no means be neglected. It is, and should be, a principal part of our devotion in this ordinance, which hath from hence the denomination of the Eucharist, as it is often stiled by the antients, and therefore the apostles call it *The Cup of Blessing*, because when we take this cup of salvation we should then praise the name of the Lord. Let us then lift up our hearts and give thanks unto the Lord in this sacramental commemoration, according to that pious form used in the ancient liturgies, usefully retained in ours, wherein the priest calls upon the people, saying, *Lift up your hearts*,—who answer, *We lift them up to the Lord*. Priest. *Let us give thanks to our Lord God?*—Answer. *It is meet and right so to do.*

6. It should be a remembrance of prayer.

The holy sacrament should be received with prayer, as well as thanksgiving. When the apostle had directed

directed the christian soldier in putting on the several parts of the armour of God, as the shield of faith, breastplate of righteousness, girdle of truth, helmet of salvation, sword of the spirit, &c. he super-adds to these the grace and duty of prayer, as of general use and influence upon the whole. So here, in this celebration of Christ's Death, we should exercise faith, repentance, love, joy, and thankfulness, managing them with prayer. This should be as the channel of all our devotions. We should dart up frequent ejaculations of prayer as well as praise to the throne of grace, when we come to the table of the Lord. Immediately before receiving, to this and the like effect—

Lord, thou hast said he that eateth thy flesh and drinketh thy blood hath eternal life.—Behold the servant of the Lord—Be it unto me according to thy word. So at the receiving of the bread, after some such manner—*By thy crucified body deliver me from the body of death.* And at receiving the cup—*O let this blood of thine purge my conscience from dead works to serve the living God.* So after receiving—*Blessed be the Lord, even the God of my salvation; strengthen me, O Lord, by thy grace, and let me no more return unto folly. I have sworn and am steadfastly purposed to keep thy righteous judgements. O hold thou up my going in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.*

Thus the whole of this sacrament should be performed and managed in a mixt sort: as with mixt affections of joy and sorrow, so with mixt duties of prayer and praise; praise and thanksgiving for this inestimable mercy, so great salvation; and prayer and ardent petitions for the application of it to our own souls.

Use 1. For instruction concerning the nature of this ordinance. The excellency of the duty and the difficulty of its use. The excellency of it appears from the end and object: For the more noble the end and object of any action is, the more noble is that action. Now the great object of this sacrament is Christ, who is most precious to believers, their life and joy; and the great end of it is the remembrance of him and his death, and the exceeding riches of his inestimable love in our redemption, the most refreshing and comfortable consideration in the world.—And, then again, as there is such excellency in this ordinance, which should persuade us to come willingly and gladly to it, so there is difficulty in the worthy performance of it; seeing it requires not only a slight, genetal, transient, unaffecting commemoration, but a serious and holy exercise of several graces, duties, and mixt affections as were shewn before, which should make us very heedful in it, to withdraw our hearts from all diversions, and to unite them in an holy diligence of devotion, and, as much as may be, in an universal practice of those graces and duties.

Use 2. Conviction of the negligence and formality of such as come to this sacrament, without due regard had to this great end of it, and the serious holy management of their hearts in it. Beloved, I hope better things of you; but surely there are too many persons that come to the Lord's table, without considering, as they ought, the great end for which they should come; even the remembrance of Christ and his death; or, if they do think of it, yet but a in a loose, easy manner, not fixing their thoughts

thoughts in due seriousness and soul-affecting considerations, nor striving to exercise faith, repentance, and other graces, so vigorously and powerfully as is their duty and concernment in the celebration of this sacrament. Now when persons are slight and negligent, as in their preparations for it—so in the performance of this holy ordinance, they frustrate the great end of it, the due commemoration of Christ, and make it fruitless to themselves. Tho' they receive *sacramentum*, yet not *rem sacramenti*. They go away with the shell without the kernel—They catch at the shadow and loose the substance—They partake of the elements and outward visible signs, but do not comprehend the benefits and inward visible grace.

Use 3. Exhortation to discharge this duty of the remembrance of Christ and his death faithfully in this holy sacrament. Let us then rouse and awake our hearts and graces: stir up faith in lively actings on the merits of his death; draw forth repentance in holy mourning for our sins, and provoke and enflame our love to him by the consideration of his unparalleled love. Let our hearts rejoice and exult in meditating our redemption, the purchase of his precious death, and be enlarged in praise and thanksgivings. Let our souls breathe after him, and ascend up to him, in zealous affections and ardent prayers, and earnest desires to the remembrance of his name. And indeed, where can you better bestow the *all* of your hearts and souls, than upon your loving dying Saviour? What object is there that we should more delight to remember and meditate upon, and take more satisfaction in the contemplation of. Let us exercise ourselves
often,

often, therefore in remembrance of him; but especially let our souls feed on him by sweet repasts and meditations of faith, love, and desire, when we come to this holy supper; that so, it may be a blessed foretaste and earnest of our future celebration of that glorious marriage-supper of

The lamb to all eternity.

For which God of his infinite mercy prepare us all. Amen.

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SERMON

SERMON II.

ON THE PLEASURES OF RELIGION.

PROV. III. 17.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness.

IT would be one great step to our improvement in religion, if we could once establish in our minds a just and true notion of the nature and extent of its precepts. If we could divest ourselves of all the prejudices which discourage us from the practice of our duty, and behold religion in that amiable light in which the scriptures have recommended it to our practice. A just conception of the pleasures and beauty of holiness would effectually engage our obedience, and teach us to consider christianity as a system of morals, which it is our happiness as well as our duty to observe.

But the misfortune is, we impose upon ourselves; we take up with unworthy or imperfect apprehensions of religion: and hence it comes to pass, that it so seldom reaches the heart, so faintly influences our life and conduct.

Amongst all the prejudices which the great enemy of souls has suggested to us against God and his dealings with men, there is scarce any which has had so fatal an influence as this persuasion—that christianity exposes us to hardships and difficulties, more and greater, than would otherwise befall us—That it declares war against our natural affections, and dooms us to a rigorous abstinence from all the comforts and enjoyments of life.

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This reflection is of all others the most disrelishing and ungrateful to the heart of man. He starts back with horror at the melancholy doctrine of self-denial. We complain it lays a restraint on human nature too heavy for us to bear: and therefore can by no means reconcile ourselves to what in appearance, is so great an enemy to our pleasures.

And yet this, we read, is the distinguishing characteristic of a real christian. This, we are taught, is the indispensable condition of our admission into the number of Christ's disciples: and that our whole life must be a perpetual conflict with flesh and blood, and a kind of spiritual warfare against sin, the world, and the devil.

This, we think, is an hard saying. We think it hard to be obliged to throw off our very selves, and bid defiance to our nature, by a perpetual opposition to our strongest appetites and desires. It is with abhorrence we think of thwarting (what above all things we love) ourselves; and the strongest motives are unable to prevail upon us, to abjure the delights and amusements of the world, in the midst of all the opportunities of enjoyment.

The maxim, which I have chosen to employ your thoughts upon, seems to afford a fair and natural occasion of examining this melancholy notion of religion. The wise man, you see, represents it in a very different view: he assures us, that it affords delight and satisfaction, and recommends the practice of it from the pleasure that attends it. The words, if we carry our eye back to the 13 verse, will appear to be spoken concerning wisdom—A name by which the wisest of men
here

here intended to set before us religion, as being fully persuaded in his own heart, that the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding; whilst at the same time he teaches us (a truth which he had learnt himself from his own experience) that this likewise, whatever we may think, will afford us pleasure and delight.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness.

You will naturally expect, that from these words I should discourse to you of *all* the pleasures of religion. A subject so delightful, that it could not but engage your attention; and so useful that it would well deserve your most serious consideration: but it is withal so vast and comprehensive, that it would be impossible, within the allotted time, to consider and pursue it through all its branches. Great, no doubt, is the delight which the righteous man enjoys from those exalted speculations which religion has opened to us. That unlimited extent of power, which out of nothing could produce this goodly frame—that infinite wisdom which sees at one view, past, present, and to come—the immutability both of the nature and promises of God—the wonders of his love to mankind, and the abyss of good that is in him, are subjects which must afford unspeakable delight to the inquisitive mind, and fill the pious soul with a pleasure like that of angels. But, as it seems most agreeable to the wise man's design, and is besides the most useful part of a discourse on this point, to exhibit the present joys, which result from an holy life, I shall consider the words before us in this single point of view, and confine myself to those pleasures

tures in particular which attend the practice of religion.

I might begin with observing that religion not only indulges us in the *free use* of pleasures that affect the body, but likewise *heightens* and *improves* them. The great defect of all sensual delights is this, that they naturally cloy and satiate. The keenness of desire soon abates, and then all is insipid and unaffecting. Each succeeding amusement is but cloying the sickly lust of a false appetite. Now a sober and moderate use of the good things of this life (and which, by the way, is an essential part of the true religion) supplies this defect. It preserves the organs of sense (which are the instruments of pleasure) in their due purity and quickness: and by calling us off from enjoyment before it can satiate, makes it more delightful and affecting when we return to it again.—Thus, as the pleasures of the world serve to refresh us when we are weary, they never weary us after we are refreshed. As it is only the abuse of earthly enjoyments that make them sinful, so 'tis this too, that makes them less relishing and pleasant.—Where the sin begins, there the pleasure decreases and abates. The delights which the epicure enjoys, bear no proportion to those of the temperate man—the one rises chearful and refreshed from supplying the calls of a regular appetite, his spirits enlivened and exalted, and all his faculties in their full strength—the other, as soon as the long fatigue of ceremony and surfeit ends, loaths and nauseates what he lately viewed with eagerness and rapture: how heavily his life passes away, in a dozed condition, between sleeping and waking;

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his digestion overcharged, his understanding confus'd and stupified, his body filled with the seeds of lurking diseases, that will transmit rottenness and misery to his posterity, and soon make him a common prey, himself, to worms.—And let him who says there is any pleasure in a debauch, convince us that there is not infinitely greater in a moderate use of that enlivening remedy, which, in the language of the Royal Psalmist, *maketh glad the heart of man*. Indeed health is so necessary an ingredient in all our pleasures, that without it, neither riches nor honours, nor any thing else that the heart of man most passionately doats on, can afford any satisfaction or joy. And surely no one will deny that a healthful and sound state of body, in an eminent degree, depends upon a discreet government of our passions, and a prudent and moderate enjoyment of the creatures which God has provided for the support and comfort of mankind. The best natural constitution in the world cannot bear up under a perpetual round of intemperance and excess—dissoluteness and sensuality will soon weaken and impair it—will dull and stupify every appetite, and make our best enjoyments flat and languid.

But, besides this, there is a certain sprightliness and vivacity peculiar to the truly religious soul, that sweetens all his pleasures, and makes all the actions and perceptions of his life pleasant and delightful. True piety exalts and purifies the spirits, and dispels that melancholy and lumpishness of soul, which renders a man incapable of enjoying himself or any one else. It is the bread of life, which refreshes and strengthens a religious man's heart;

heart; it is the wine which infuses into him a kind of alacrity and gaiety of humour, and is, as it were, the oil of gladness, to make him a cheerful countenance.

Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die, was indeed the reasoning of the epicure in St. Paul.— And wretched reasoning it was—to make the shortness of human life an argument for debauchery, when that very debauchery itself is the cause of shortening it.

But further; religion not only heightens the satisfactions of human life, but supplies us likewise with the means of procuring them.— It has a natural tendency to improve our worldly circumstances, and affords us the best assurance of prosperity in life. This might, in a great degree, be collected, even from experience; for how rarely do we see the righteous forsaken, or his seed begging their bread. If the world affords some instances of distressed virtue, it may, perhaps, be so contrived by the wise disposer of all events, either to try their patience and exercise their humility, or to divert their minds from this world unto a better, that they might not take up their rest on this side of the grave, and think it good for them to be here.

But yet, though virtue may not perhaps always exempt a man from want; though in the dispositions of Providence there will be sometimes one event to the righteous and the wicked, yet this is an undoubted truth, that the good man, supposing him in equal circumstances with others, supposing him to enjoy the same advantages, the same concurrence of events with the rest of mankind, has by much the fairest prospect of success in this world.

Indeed, what part we shall act on the stage of life is not always in our power—it depends chiefly on the choice of others, on the condition and quality in which we are born; or other accidental circumstances, to which we ourselves contribute nothing. But so far as the success of our pursuits, in the station allotted to us, can be determined by our own endeavours, it is certain that the best expedient to obtain it, is a serious practice of religion.

For he, who in the language of the prophet, walketh in the statutes of life, as such is possessed of all the qualifications we usually esteem serviceable, in the pursuits of worldly interest. It is sober and regular life, as it dispels the clouds that arise from the fumes of lust and passion, keeps his understanding clear, and all his faculties in their full vigour. The designing part of mankind (who lie in wait to make the advantages of the follies and infirmities of others) have no opportunities of surprizing him in an unguarded hour, and imposing upon his weakness. He can look forward into the consequences of things, can represent what is future and to come, as present, or for ever past. He can deliberate with calmness, can determine with prudence, and transact with caution. In a word, he has the fairest chance to discern clearly, where his advantage lies, to find out the best means of obtaining it, and to execute those means with success. And then his prudence keeps him apprehensive of the changes and chances of this mortal life, instructs him to cut off all profusion and extravagance, and provide against future wants and calamities. His humility cloaths him

at a cheap and easy rate. His temperance spreads for him, though a neat, yet a modest and frugal table. His attendance on the particular employment of his life, (a duty which the gospel charges upon our consciences, which it requires of us, not only for our own, but for God's sake) keeps him out of those unnecessary expences into which idleness might betray him. And that purity which is inseparable from religion never lets him feel how costly and expensive intemperance and sensuality are. His integrity secures him from the resentment and ill offices which fraudulent and designing men draw upon themselves—and his inoffensive behaviour protects him (if it be possible, for the best of men wholly to escape it) from the whisper that walketh in darkness, and from the slander that destroyeth at noon day. His virtue engages the benevolence of men and angels—his recumbency on the divine will procures the hand of Heaven to his assistance—and his readiness to relieve the necessities of others will assure him of the kind assistance and fervent prayers of all who are truly good and pious; who, in all his endeavours and pursuits, will affectionately wish him good luck in the name of the Lord.

These are virtues which are inseparably annexed to true and unaffected goodness, and which will greatly contribute to our present interest and well-being in the world.

But if, through the pride or perverseness of others, the cross circumstances of his own particular condition, or the common accidents that attend our pilgrimage in this vale of misery, the re-

religious man should sometimes meet with afflictions and disappointments, yet, under all disasters, he enjoys within, satisfaction of mind and spiritual delight. Whatever the events of this life may be, the conscientious discharge of his duty is a provision for inward joy and transport. Can any use or application of our fortunes equal the ineffable delight of doing good? Have we, by a seasonable act of charity, made the blessing of him that was ready to perish come upon us? What self congratulations spring up in the mind—How do we partake in each satisfaction we give; and receive a kind of relief ourselves, whilst we make the widow's heart to sing for joy?

Even those which men esteem the most austere and melancholy exercises of religion, are attended with solid and rational pleasures. Have we withstood a temptation or subdued a stubborn lust? Is there any sensual pleasure like that which arises in the heart from hence? As no contentions are more commendable than those we have with our lusts, so no conquest is so pleasant, as that a man has over himself. To forgive an injury, (as much against the stream of nature as it seems) to the truly religious soul, will be as much more pleasant, as it is more easy than to revenge it. It will afford him a pleasure solid and lasting; such a one as will attend him through life, and accompany him to the grave; and, on the bed of death, encourage and support his hopes of pardon from our heavenly Father, who, as our blessed Lord assures us if we forgive men their trespasses, will also forgive us ours. Repentance itself, which implies
a thorough

a thorough change of the heart and mind, and consequently must be a work of time and pains; as frightful an aspect as it bears, is attended with immediate ease and comfort, and opens a way to solid and certain happiness. How ungrateful soever this holy sorrow may appear, a good man enjoys infinitely more content and satisfaction in grieving for his offences, than ever he did in committing them.

And if each single instance of virtue thus refreshes the mind, how must the calm conscience of a whole life spent in the service of God, and the care of our souls, create a kind of heaven in our breasts, and gives us an anticipation of the happiness above. This is a perpetual source of peace and joy. Like the dew of heaven, it is not spent in a sudden, short effusion, but sheds itself abroad with a calm and regular influence, and continues a never failing supply of solid refreshment.

Most of our other pleasures are circumscribed within the present minute; they excite only a transient short sensation, and then vanish like the morning cloud; and are, as if they had never been. If they carry with them no appendant thing, if they are not in their consequences detrimental to our health, reputation, or estate; yet the care of acquiring and the apprehension of losing them, sour the enjoyment of them while they last; and when it expires, remembrance only makes us sigh for their absence, and the uneasy reflection that they are past, casts a damp over their spirits, and creates melancholy and pain.

Yet

But

But the pleasure which arises from a consciousness of having lived up to the dictates of reason and the precepts of religion, is durable and lasting.—It never satiates or wearies, but remains fresh and lively after constant enjoyment.—It will stand the test of the strictest review, and grow and increase under thought and reflection.—It depends not, like the precarious concurrence of uncertain events, but grows into the heart beyond the reach of outward accidents, or the inward decays of nature.

But what will farther enhance the pleasure which the righteous man perceives from a reflection of his past life, is the joyful assurance of an happy immortality, which the conscious remembrance of his good and pious actions opens to the mind. And it must be observed, that this glorious hope is itself the best ingredient, and the surest foundation of all his happiness below.—This will afford him easiness in his expectations, and content in all his allotments. Hence he enjoys courage and support in his distress, and a soul superior to all the accidents and calamities of life. For what is there that can befall us in this wilderness of sorrow, so bitter and ungrateful, which this assurance will not compose and sweeten. A reversion to great and glorious cannot but raise our minds to such a noble contempt of this world, as will make us look upon all the disasters in it, with the indifference of a guest that tarries but a day.

It was this joyful hope, this delightful prospect which so encouraged and supported the noble ar-

my of martyrs and confessors, the primitive heroes of our church, while the executioner himself was seen to tremble; this inspired the martyrs with calmness and composure of mind, under the most dreadful tortures that the wit and malice of men or devils could invent. So dreadful indeed, that the manner only of dying was the punishment, death itself was the deliverance.

Such was the complaisance and serenity of soul which the first christians still preserved in the blackest scenes of horror; and such will every pious christian enjoy in the most afflicting circumstances of life, from a contemplation of that eternal weight of glory prepared for him in the heavens. Secure in the protection of Almighty power, and assisted with the gracious influence of infinite goodness, he will be equal to all the trials that may attend his passage through this vale of tears to his proper home; the joyful expectation of his reward will calm all his griefs, and wipe away all tears from his eyes. When age and sickness shall remind him of his frail and mortal state, this will animate and support his sinking spirits, and in the hour of death speak peace to his departing soul.

SERMON

SERMON III.

ON FAITH.

Hebrews x. 38.

Now the just shall live by faith.

THERE are none more prone to vice, and ready to embrace error; none more unconstant and wavering in their holy profession, than unbelievers. They want that which would settle, fix, and encourage them to perseverance through the greatest difficulties and hardships, viz. a steadfast belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, with a firm assent to the veracity or truth of his gospel. True faith doth wonderfully uphold and fortify the soul of a christian, against all the terrors and menaces of the world. He that is endowed with this blessed grace, will not faint under the greatest adversity. This the apostle makes here in my text, the means of the righteous man's life and constancy in his profession,

The just shall live by faith.

The just, or the righteous man; not he who is only so in his own conceit, as the pharisees were heretofore, who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others. Or only, in the account of other men as St. Paul, before his conversion was said to be, touching the righteousness which was in the law, blameless. But he that is so in God's sight, indeed, and in truth; who worketh righteousness, and hath the righteousness

business of Christ imputed to him, whereby all that believe, are made holy, unblamable, and unreprouvable in his sight. So then, by the just man here, we are to understand the true and sincere christian, in opposition to the hypocrite, who seems to be, what in truth he is not.

This man, the text says, shall live; that is, shall support and hold himself, or live comfortably in all adversities. Now a man is said to live, or be alive, when he enjoys himself, and his life is not a burden to him; otherwise, life is worse than death. And therefore Elijah in a great distress requested of God to take away his life. *It is enough: now O Lord take my life, for I am not better than my father.* And holy Job, in that dismal complaint which he makes in the anguish and bitterness of his soul, chuseth strangling and death rather than life. Not only he that lives in sinful pleasures, but he that lives in sorrow and under pain, is, as it were, dead whilst he lives. Thus we read of Nabal, that his heart died within him. But it is not thus with the true christian. Whatsoever tidings or troubles do reach his ear, or pierce his heart, he lives in the midst of them all. He is not distracted with fears, nor cast down with heaviness, as they that are without hope. He does not faint under his burden, but both holds up and holds out, notwithstanding the discouragement he meets with in his holy profession.

But whence, or how is it (you may say) that a christian lives so comfortably in all conditions.—

The answer to this we may learn from the last word

word of the text; that which upholds him is his faith, whereby he applies Christ and the promises of his gospel to himself, and rests upon him for the supply of all his wants; for assistance in temptations, and deliverance out of all his troubles. Faith is of universal use, through the whole life of a christian; in his outward enjoyments, that they may be sanctified; in all his duties and performances, that he may be accepted; but chiefly, in his troubles and afflictions, that he may be upheld and supported. So that the text thus explained, affords us this single observation, that by the strength of faith, a christian may be supported, and live comfortably in the worst of times, or outward accidents, which may befall him. Faith is instead of all other comfort; instead of riches, when we are poor; instead of bread, when we are hungry. The true christian who lives by faith, hath the comfort of these blessings, even then when he wants them. Though he hath nothing yet in the apostles language, he possesseth all things. This supports and administers comfort, under the quickest sense of the sharpest sufferings.—By this holy David encouraged himself, saying, that though he walked through the valley of the shadow of death, he would fear no evil. Thus the prophet Habbakuk, *although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall, yet, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.* We read also, that St. Paul

Paul was joyful in tribulation, and that the martyrs were able to rejoice and sing in the midst of the most scorching flames; which they did, not so much by any special privilege peculiarly belonging to them; as by the efficacy of that faith, which is common to all believers, who have the same God and the same Saviour, the same covenant and promises as they had.

But the more effectually to prosecute this point, I will endeavour to shew you—

1. What faith that is, which thus upholds the soul in troubles and affliction. And then—

2. What faith does contribute to our support and comfort in times of trouble.

Which when I have done, I will, in the third and last place, endeavour to make some practical improvements of the whole.

First Then, I am to show what faith that is which thus upholds the soul in trouble and affliction.—And this, at first view, will appear to be, not a meer nominal, temporary, or historical faith; but such a faith, which, as the apostle speaks, Galatians 5, 6, *worketh by love, and produceth good works, which has its fruit unto holiness; and the end, everlasting life!* A firm and steadfast belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, with a full assent to the scriptures as the word of God; and an unshaken adherence to all the divine promises and precepts that are therein contained. This is that whereby the just man is supplied with strength sufficient to support him through the whole course of his life. This carries him out of himself as it were, and takes from him all carnal confidence, to rest and rely wholly upon Jesus Christ, and to expect all

good from him. This makes him to live and depend upon him, not only for pardon of sin, but even for temporal blessings; they being the fruit of his all-sufficient merits and intercession, and of the covenant which is ratified with his most precious blood. Which brings me to show:—

Second. How this faith does uphold and support the soul in the day of adversity, or time of trouble. And here—

1. It secures it as to its chief concerns, viz. of its being in the love and favour of God. Now there is nothing can make them miserable who have the Lord for their friend, and are assured of his loving kindness and favour. So the apostle reasons in Romans 8. 31. 32v. *what shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also, freely give us all things?* Now faith certifies the conscience of its interest in the love of God and Christ, and the joy that flows from this blessed privilege extinguishes the sense of outward danger or troubles. He who is in any measure assured of the love of God, cares not for the troubles or threatenings of this present world.—As the same apostle has it in the 35 v. of the chapter last quoted, *who shall separate from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* And in Acts 20. 23. 24v. he says, *that though bonds and afflictions abide him, yet, as he there goes on, none of those things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

But *secondly*, Faith repels those temptations which are apt to offer themselves and overwhelm the soul in time of trouble.—As particularly those temptations from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

And *first*, From the world.—In times of persecution or distress, the world usually smiles upon us, and tempts us with its enticing and deceitful flatteries; presents us with a view of its superficial glories and excellencies; telling us what it will give us, if we will but deny our Lord and master, and renounce our religion.—That we shall not want any of the riches or glories of the world. And on the other hand, it frowns and threatens, that if we will persist in our religion, or in the apostles words, hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, and not suffer ourselves to be profelited, that we shall be deprived of all its favors and outward blessings, and be forced to lead our lives in sorrow and misery. These, and such like, are the methods and temptations which they would commonly make use of to persuade christians to draw back, or fall off from their profession. But now true faith fortifies the christian against these flatteries and frowns. This is the victory, says St. John, that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Thus also, *secondly*, For those temptations with which the great tempter of mankind, the devil, usually attacks us in the time of trouble or affliction.—And indeed he will be sure to be very busy then, to tempt us to impatience, despair, and the use of evil means, to help ourselves out of trouble, to avoid and secure ourselves from those dangers

dangers which we either foresee or fear. Now faith, as a shield to quench those fiery darts of satan, teacheth us to judge of God, not by what we feel or suffer, but by what he hath promised, and to wait upon him in his own time and way.—And for the prevention of fears and troubles, and any unlawful resolution of securing ourselves from approaching evils, it teacheth us, not to fear those who can only kill the body (when they have done the most they can) but rather to fear him, who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.

Thirdly, Faith suggests unto us, that nothing happens or befalls us, but by the good providence of a most wise, gracious, and loving Father; and from hence teaches us to reason with our Saviour—*The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?* There is nothing happens to any one, but by the good providence and appointment of God: and he permits nothing to befall his faithful servants, but what may, nay, will, in the end, some way or other tend to their good. And this faith assures us of: that God has very gracious and merciful ends in all our afflictions; and that the end of them is to prove, purge, and refine. From whence we may conclude, that the cup, how bitter soever it be, is as phyfic to cure—not as poison, to destroy: and that if it was not for our good, nay, if it was not needful for us, God would not suffer it. An expert and skilful physician does not only diet, but if occasion be, purges his patient also. And surely there is no such purifier and cleanser of the soul, as trouble and affliction; if we do not, like wilful and unruly patients, frustrate and hinder their efficacy, by their irregular management of ourselves
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under them. Nay, physio is not so necessary for the body as afflictions are for the soul; the diseases thereof being far more dangerous, and of greater consequence. They serve to purge our hearts of pride, voluptuousness, hypocrisy, and all inordinate love of the world, and such like distempers. Now the soul, looking to the end of God, sees it is good for him to be afflicted. A man takes anything well that comes from love. Men thank their physicians and surgeons, though they put them to extreme pain for the present, knowing that they do it for their future ease.—So we, through faith, being persuaded that God intends our good in all the troubles and afflictions that do befall us, have great reason to bear them the more comfortably, and with the greater degree of christian patience. We cannot surely think that we suffer unawares to him, who sees and orders all things in the world: and with as little reason can we also think, that his chastisements, or those afflictions he is pleased to lay upon us, are designed for our hurt, because they are disposed of by him, who intends and projects our benefit only: which consideration may, nay, if duly reflected on, will and must administer great comfort and support, under the most pressing and sore calamities that are incident to the sons of men.

Again, *fourthly*, Faith assures us of a blessed issue and deliverance out of all those troubles that befall us. Though heaviness may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning.—Though the troubles of the righteous are many, yet the Lord will deliver him out of all—And certainly he knows the best way and means, and fittest

fitteſt time for our deliverance. Troubles ſhall not continue longer than is needful. Now the hope of deliverance mollifies the anguiſh of the heaviest croſs. A man never faints untill he diſpairs of an end.—And for any thing he knows, may go from bad to worſe. But—

Fifthly. Faith alſo puts us in mind of our conformity unto Chriſt in all our afflictions; it propoſes unto us the grand example of our bleſſed Lord, as the pattern of our ſufferings: Him who had a tender ſenſe of the leaſt, and yet patiently endured the greateſt. It teaches us, in all our ſufferings here on earth, to look unto Jeſus, the author and finiſher of our faith; who, for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the croſs, deſpiſed the ſhame, and is ſet down on the right hand of God. The wiſdom of God thought it expedient, that the firſt embraces of chriſtianity ſhould, by great hardships and perſecutions, be trained up for glory, and through many tribulations, enter into the kingdom of God. And, to animate and encourage them thereto, the captain of their ſalvation was made perfect by ſufferings, and conquered by dying. How much more ſhould the conſideration of this excellent and truly heroic pattern ſupport and arm us with courage and conſtancy, and patience againſt the common and ordinary calamities of this life, or, indeed, againſt any other that may befall us.

Sixthly, and laſtly, That which ſupplies the chriſtian with the greateſt vigour, ſtrength, and courage to undergo the moſt difficult hardships, is the glory that will follow our ſufferings, as the reward of them, if they be for God and his cauſe. And this great reward does faith ſuggeſt unto us; ſetting before

fore us that eternal weight of glory, which is laid up for all those that are faithful unto death. *Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!* Rev. 2. 10. For this cause, says the apostle, *we faint not; for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen—for the things that are seen, are temporal; but the things that are not seen, are eternal.* 2 Cor. 4. 16, 17, 18. The sense of sufferings scarce abideth upon that soul that is lifted up with such sublime and heavenly meditations:—the apprehension of what is future being so great and glorious, and incomprehensible, makes men even careless and insensible of what is present. Now faith secures us, that we shall be infinite gainers by whatever we suffer for righteousness sake; and who would not be encouraged to suffer upon such a great advantage—to endure a short affliction for an endless happiness?

And thus have I showed you, in several particulars, by what means and manner, and from what considerations, more especially, the soul is upheld and supported by the strength of faith, in times of trouble and temptation. And so I go on to the third and last thing proposed to be done, which was, to make some practical improvement upon the whole. And—

First Then, we may hence learn, and see the reason of mens immoderate sadness and dejection, under affliction, or in evil times; that it chiefly proceeds from the want of faith. They look not up, nor place their trust and confidence in God, but wholly

wholly depend upon the comforts of this present life; so that when these either actually fail, or are but in danger of being lost, they are presently overwhelmed with sorrow.—They consider not the hand and providence of God in sending afflictions, nor those good and wise ends for which he sends them.—They have little or no assurance of deliverance, or of a change for the better. And hence it is, that they are so much disheartened and dejected from their unbelief and distrust of God. this the psalmist tells us from his own experience. *I had fainted, says he, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.* His faith put life and courage into his soul, and made it resolve, as in the beginning of the 4 Psalm. *not to fear though the earth be moved, and though the waters be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof rage and swell, and though the mountains shake at the tempest of the same.* Suffer me therefore in the last place, my brethren, to exhort you all, to endeavour after a lively faith; to believe in God; to assent unto the truth of the scriptures as the word of God; to believe all the divine promises, precepts, and threatenings.—These will supply you with life and strength in times of evil and adversity. Faith indeed will be necessary for us at all times, but more especially in times of adversity, when our earthly supports seem to fly from and forsake us. In light afflictions perhaps, reason and morality may make us hold up our heads, and not despond or faint.—But in greater afflictions, when even sense is at a loss, and reason sees not help, if we have no faith, we must inevitably sink.—Whereas, if we have faith, though
all

all our earthly confidences be shipwrecked, it will find a plank to bring us safe to our harbour. It is like the palm that sinks not under the heaviest burden, or like the oil that gets up and swims above the pressures of waters. Let us therefore, I say, labour, not only to have faith, but to use it and live by it. And that, not only in order to our eternal salvation, but for our more comfortable being, whilst we are here upon earth. Let us go on and persist in our duty and the profession of our faith without wavering—considering that he is faithful that hath promised to trust and encourage ourselves in God, who both can and by his holy apostle has declared that he will *make all things work together, for good to them that fear and love him.*

SERMON IV.

ON THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

JOHN i. 11.

He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

THE words which I have now read, do declare what success and entertainment the ambassadors of Christ are like to meet with in the world. It is not to be expected they should find better acceptance than Christ their lord and master had, whilst he was upon earth. For, as he himself reasons, the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. Neither hath the servant any reason to expect better usage than his master, but rather worse: for if they do these things, in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? If Christ himself was not received, no marvel if his messengers and servants are not regarded; if they find not that fruit of their labours and success of their ministry, which they do and reasonably ought to desire and expect. How says the evangelist St. John, *He came unto his own, and his own received him not*: Unto his own—that is, the people of the jews; to whom this grace was before promised, and who had long expected the coming of the Messiah; and yet when he was come, and tendered salvation unto them, nay, beseeched and entreated them to come unto him, they would not receive him. Thus the prophet Isaiah—*Who hath believed*

believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?—He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from him. He was despised and we esteemed him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. In which words we have observable—

1. The great love and condescension of Christ in coming into the world.

2. The persons to whom he came. He came to his own.

3. The ill entertainment he met with amongst them: and his own received him not.

First, The great love and condescension of our blessed Saviour in coming into the world to visit mankind. That he, whose throne was in Heaven, who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, should so far humble and debase himself, as to come down and inhabit on the earth, to dwell with sinful men: that he should come voluntarily, of his own good pleasure; not for any desert or importunity on our parts, but out of mere pity and compassion to our miserable and lost condition: to reclaim us from our evil ways; to guide, direct and instruct us in the way that leads to life eternal; to visit and redeem us from our iniquities, and to turn us from the power of Satan, to the knowledge and obedience of God. But this being a subject more suitable for the commemoration of our blessed Saviour's nativity, I shall therefore dwell no longer upon this head, but proceed to the second thing observed from the words, viz.

Second, The persons unto whom Christ came; that

that is, the people of the jews, unto whom he especially came. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath visited and redeemed his people.*

Now the people of Israel may be said to be *his own*, upon these following accounts.

Because God had vouchsafed unto them greater mercies and privileges than to any other people. They had his word and ordinances.—Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenant, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. He sheweth his word unto Jacob, and statutes and ordinances unto Israel.—He hath not dealt so with any nation, neither hath the heathen knowledge of his laws.—The Lord had separated the whole nation of Israel to himself.—They were made peculiarly his, as you may read—*for thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God.—The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people to himself, above all the people that are upon the face of the earth.—Because the Lord loved you, and would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers so. And ye shall be holy unto me, for I the Lord am holy and have severed you from other people that ye should be mine.—*They were his by profession. The name of God was called upon by them.—They professed themselves the Lord's people; they claimed a peculiar interest in God, according to that of the psalmist; they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. And in this respect they were said to lean upon God, that is, they bore themselves up upon this privilege.

Lastly,

Lastly, They were called *bis own*, because the promises of the Messiah were made peculiarly unto them, whose coming they earnestly expected. And yet when he was come; they would have none of him.—Though he was pleased to come, and be born among them, to live and converse with them; to endear himself to them by all the softer methods of love and mildness; to declare himself and the truth of his doctrine by wonders and miracles; yet then *they received him not*; which was the *third* thing observed from the words, namely, the ill entertainment that our Saviour met with in the world, and that especially from his own people. *His own received him not.* He that had so undervalued himself for the sake of man, to procure his redemption from sin and misery; was himself unworthily and ungratefully rejected. When Christ would have gathered them, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, they would not come unto him.—When he offered grace and mercy to them, they would not accept it.—When he would have taught and instructed them in the ways of salvation, they turned their backs and would not regard. They lightly esteemed all his gracious offers through their ignorance, malice, and other vile affections. They undervalued and contemned that precious gift of God, that was then exhibited unto them. Though he taught them as one having authority, and spake as never man spake, insomuch that the people wondered at his gracious sayings; yet all that heard him were not converted, neither did they embrace his word.—Insomuch, that he complains of them. “I have laboured

laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain, yet surely, my judgments is with the Lord and my work with my God."

In the prosecution of this particular, I shall shew you first, the greatness of the sin of not receiving Christ; of slighting and rejecting his gospel. Secondly, shew you the persons who are guilty of this sin.

And *First*, Not to embrace and receive Jesus Christ when offered to us in the gospel, is a most heinous sin, and a most grievous offence. When Christ comes and tenders his grace unto a people, sets before them the unsearchable riches of his love, even prays and beseeches them to be reconciled, to forsake their sins, to turn unto him, and to the obedience of his gospel; and they reject his offers, this is what doth exceedingly provoke him, and than which no sin is of a more aggravating nature. There is a twofold coming of Christ unto men; personal and ministerial. He came personally to the people of the jews; and he comes ministerially to all others, unto whom his gospel is preached. Their sin is as great, who reject him in the ministry of the gospel, as theirs who rejected him in his own person. He that receiveth not Christ's word, rejects his person. Thus much our blessed Saviour tells us in express words—"he that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day." The neglect and scorn that is done and offered to his word, reflects immediately upon his person. So that all they, to whom the grace of the gospel is tendered, whether

ther by Christ himself or his ministers, who do not receive it, are guilty of this great sin. The ministers of Christ are his ambassadors, sent to declare his will and mind unto the people; to endeavour, in his name, to make reconciliation between God and them, by warning them to turn from their iniquities and transgressions, and to treat with them about those weighty things that concern their everlasting peace. Now, for any people to slight and under value this word, that is thus conveyed unto them, and not to receive it with all due reverence and respect, as it is the word of God: to neglect and refuse the tenders of grace, the offers of salvation, and the calls to repentance by the ministers of Christ, is to refuse Christ himself, whose word they deliver, and from whom they receive their authority and commission to speak. Thus again, our blessed Saviour—"he that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.—And so it is on the other side, he that rejecteth you, rejecteth me."

And the greatness of this sin appears; first, from the severe threatenings that are denounced against it.—*This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world; and men love darkness rather than light.* This is that which will greatly enhance their guilt and aggravate their punishment; that when God made such an extraordinary provision for them, and offered them so great mercy, and such plentiful means of grace; when Christ came to enlighten them, and take them off from their former evil ways, that men should be so much besotted

to their sinful courses, as to reject the mercies offered unto them, and to choose rather to continue in their sins and ignorances, than to be reformed or purified, or so much as taught their duty by him. Again, the rejecting of the precious grace offered in the gospel, will bring upon men the sorest and most insupportable punishment of any other sin in the world:—for, as St. Paul says, *how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?* Which, at the first, began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him. Which interrogation implies, that the contemners of the gospel shall be punished much more severely than the transgressions against the law; which we may more plainly see set down in the 10 c. 28, 9.—He that despised Moses's law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought guilty, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the spirit of grace. And this our Saviour declares to us, in a parable, “ the kingdom of Heaven is like to a King who made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them who were bidden to the wedding, and they would not come.—Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, tell them which are bidden, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come to the marriage.—But they made light of it, and went their ways; one to his farm, another to his merchandize; and the remnant took

took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the King heard thereof he was wrath, and sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city."

Now, according to this, it hath, and shall be, the fate of the gospel now preached unto men, and first to the jews, to meet with such reception, as a King is, by the parable supposed to meet with, who made a feast, and invited many guests, who all slighted the invitation, and barbarously treated those who were sent unto them, on no other message, but to invite them to a feast, and shamefully killed them who came only to oblige them. And what will be the end of such contempters of gospel invitations, but what befell those in the conclusion of the parable, miserably to be destroyed. And thus this parable became an history in the people of the jews.—Their not receiving of Christ, nor entertaining of his gospel, brought upon them and their city, a more speedy and terrible destruction than all their sins besides.

—So says the apostle, "who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they pleased not God and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the gentiles, that they may be saved, to fill up their sins always; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.—They are become the shame and reproach of all people."

Secondly, The greatness of this sin, of not receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, doth farther appear from the formal nature of it.—It being an act of the highest ingratitude that the Son of God should leave the bosom of his father, and out of his inex-

pressible love come from heaven to save us, and when he comes to us, not vouchsafe to receive or entertain him, but as it were, shut our doors against him, and endeavour to keep him out from our company, and so oppose the kindness he would confer upon us, and scorn that love which he hath manifested toward us. Nothing provokes a man so much as the abuse of his love and kindness.—How then must it affect our Lord Jesus Christ to be thus requited of them, unto whom he hath shewn such unspeakable and transcendent love, that he should come down from heaven for the sake of men, to procure their good and felicity, and unworthily to be slighted and rejected by those for whom he did so much, and designed farther to oblige? That he should be so merciful and indulgent toward mankind, as to suffer and undergo so many indignities for their sakes; to shed his precious blood for their redemption; and then to have the merits of his blood, of his death and passion slighted, under-valued, and trampled under foot.

Again, That he should be so kind to reveal the will of God for our salvation, to discover and make manifest those mysteries that had lain hid for many ages past; that he should bring joyful news to the world; a glorious gospel, glad tidings of peace; that he should give us means to inform our judgments, to illuminate our understandings, to direct our wills and conversations, and to remove the veil of darkness and ignorance that covered the whole earth: and yet, that men should slight all those blessings and privileges, reject and under-value the author of them, and prefer darkness before

fore the glorious light of the gospel; that these mercies and kindnesſes ſhould be ſo much vilified, as not to be thought worthy the reception of his creatures: this is a moſt provoking return, and the higheſt ingratitude. May we not here cry out, as he did, "Hear O heavens, and give ear O earth; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled againſt me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the aſs his maſter's crib; but Iſreal doth not know, my people do not conſider." May we not here alſo ſay, as Moſes did to the children of Iſreal, after he had declared the goodneſs of God, and their corruptions, their perverſe and crooked diſpoſitions. Do ye thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe.

Thirdly, The greatneſs of this ſin, of not receiving Chriſt, appears, from the diſhonour that is caſt on God and upon all his glorious attributes. As on his wiſdom which he hath ſo much magnified in the œconomy and contrivance of our redemption, more than in all his works beſides. Now for ſuch poor creatures as we are, to paſs by this aſtoniſhing project, as a matter not worthy our looking after and taking notice of, is a very great diſhonour to the divine wiſdom; ſo alſo for the truth of God. The not receiving of Chriſt, nor readily believing and embracing his goſpel, doth even make God a liar, and call in queſtion the verity of what he hath delivered; as if it were all fiction, and no better than the vain inventions of men. Beſides, it offers the greateſt affront that can be, to the ſovereignty of God; ſeeing he hath expreſſed and plainly declared his will: that above all things in the world we ſhould receive his ſon, and honour him
with

with the honour that is due unto him, that is, even as we honour his father. And lastly, this offers an abuse to God's goodness and mercy; than which nothing doth more, provoke him to displeasure. Now saith the apostle, God in sending his son hath commended his love toward us; in that, when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. He hath shown us, not one single mercy only, but the riches of his goodness, abundance of mercy, and the fullness of his grace. How great then is their sin, who by rejecting the son of God, do despise such inexpressible love and mercy.

But here you may ask, who are those that are guilty of this great sin. Be it far, may we say, from any of us; we profess the name of Christ, believe and embrace his doctrine, assent unto the truth of the scriptures; we condemn the jews for rejecting of Christ and for their barbarous usage toward him.

But to this, we answer: That all jews and infidels are guilty of this sin; all open enemies and opposers of Christ; neither are they the only persons. Besides those that do not acknowledge his name at all, there are many that are called christians, that do profess Christ, who yet receive him not. Whosoever allows himself in the practice of any known sin, hath not received Christ; though in words he acknowledges him, yet in works he denies him.—He doth as good as say with those rebels in the gospel.—We will not have this man to reign over us; we will not admit him as our sovereign, nor submit ourselves to his laws.—Whilst we live in sin and wickedness, let our profession be what it will; and whilst we obey the lusts

lusts of the flesh, and follow after the sinful pleasures of the world; let us take the name of Christ never so often in our mouths, we have not truly received him.—For had we received him in truth, that grace which is revealed in the gospel, would have taught us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lust; and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world. Now, whilst we continue in sin; delight in intemperance and excess; and exercise ourselves in acts of injustice and oppression; whilst we are careless of our duty toward God; neglecting his statutes and ordinances, it is manifest, we have neither received Christ nor embraced his gospel.

Let not therefore those that make an outward profession of Christ, too much presume upon their love to him, that they have received him and his doctrine, and that they are far from the state of infidels and unbelievers. Since the christian religion hath been generally professed among us, and countenanced by the authority of the civil magistrate, and there have been laws and statutes enacted to punish the reproachers and blasphemers of it: the name of a jew or an infidel is become as odious, as the name of Christ was among them. Many men are apt to persuade themselves, that they love Christ, and believe in his name, because it is held so great a stain and ignominy in christian states, to be accounted an infidel; so that upon the very same grounds, the jews, and other enemies of the gospel, did persecute christianity, many do now embrace and profess it; not because they have any distinct knowledge of the real worth and excellency of Jesus Christ, and of the great benefits

nefits that accrue unto mankind from him, but because the christian religion is most in credit and fashion, and hath the countenance and approbation of the higher powers; and other religions are condemned and spoke against. But this is not truly to receive Christ—'tis not enough to receive him formally and customarily, but in sincerity and in truth.—To receive him as our Lord, as he that hath supremacy over us; and to yield obedience to his laws, to conform our lives according to the rule and doctrine of his gospel, as our Saviour and Redeemer; to be sensible of our sins, and of our miserable and lost condition; to receive him as the only person that can save us from our sins, and as a mediator that can only procure our redemption, and make reconciliation between God and us.

Let me, therefore, exhort you all, to take heed of this sin of rejecting Christ—of slighting Christ, and refusing his gospel. 'Twill be a more grievous and heinous offence, and accompanied with more aggravating circumstances for us to reject Christ, than for any other persons in the world; whether jews, turks, or heathens.—For us, whom Christ hath offered himself unto—made known, and revealed his will—sent his word and gospel among us, in a plentiful manner:—for us, who are his own people, called by his name, who do profess our faith in him, and assent unto the truth of his gospel:—for us, I say, to reject him, to violate his laws and despise his ordinances, will be the most base and unworthy dealing imaginable. 'Tis not so much for infidels, that make no acknowledgment of Christ, to reject him and disobey his commands,

mands, as for those who do profess his name :—for them to refuse him, rebel against him, and despise his goodness and mercy, is the highest affront.—Such do by their sins, as it were, crucify him afresh, and put him again to open shame ! And the wounds of a friend must certainly be much more grievous than those of an open professed enemy. And, as the sin is more heinous, so will the punishment be greater. For christians to reject the gospel of Christ, doth not only enhance their guilt above heathens and infidels, but likewise will increase and advance their punishment. So that the lamentable woe, denounced by our Saviour upon these three impenitent and unthankful cities, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, is in this case very applicable—“ for it will be more tolerable at the day of judgment, for Tyre and Sidon, and the worst of men, that never had any knowledge of Christ, nor ever pretended any profession of him ; than for christians, who have had and declared both ; who have had the gospel of salvation preached unto them ; that word which was confirmed by many wonders and miracles, and yet not regarded it ; but still continued in their sins, and would not be prevailed upon to repent of them, and sincerely obey his gospel.”

SERMON V.

ON THE PLEASURES OF A RELIGIOUS LIFE.

37th Psalm, v. 33.

Keep innocency, and take heed to the thing that is right; for that shall bring a man peace at the last.

THE great difference between a life of sin and wickedness, and a life of piety and virtue, appears in this: that whereas the former consults only our present interest, the latter provides for our future and eternal well-being; and lays a sure foundation for our everlasting peace and happiness. The greatest advantages we can possibly promise ourselves from a wicked course, is, at best, but to be diverted a little, and pleasantly entertained for our term of life; which, besides the uncertainty of it, is, at longest, very short and transitory; mere nothing, in comparison with the happiness of Heaven, and the joys of eternity: for time itself has no proportion to eternity; much less that span of it that makes up the life of man. Behold says the psalmist, "thou hast made my days, as it were, a span long; and my age is even as nothing in respect of thee."—So, that was our whole life one continued scene of pleasure, it would be nothing in respect of that eternity we are to act upon another stage. And indeed such a degree of pleasure would contract this span, and make it much shorter; and yet this is the most a life of sin can possibly pretend

pretend to, for it lays claim to nothing beyond the grave, but misery and destruction. And when once this transitory moment is past, all that we can then say of it, will be, that the pleasure of it is gone; but the evil remains, with a dreadful looking for of judgement. The whole of life is but a point, a little speck between time and eternity; and yet, 'tis but a very small part even of that which we enjoy. The more usual method of sin, is to mix and vary the scene, to divert awhile with pleasure; and when that is over, to make us pay dearly for it; and afflict us with a sharp, and perhaps, long repentance.—Indeed, a bad conscience is a companion, troublesome enough in the midst of the highest enjoyments.—'Tis like the hand writing upon the wall, enough to spoil and disrelish the feast. But much more, when the hurry and tumult of delight is over, when all is still and silent; when the sinner has nothing to do but attend the lashes and reproaches of his own evil mind; and this, in spite of all the common arts of diversion, will be often the case of every wicked man. Our faculties will not bear constant pleasure, any more than constant pain: there will be intervals which will be sure to be filled with uncomfortable thoughts and black reflections; so that when the accounts of sin are cast up, this will be found to be the sum:—a little present gratification, at the expence of a great deal of succeeding trouble, shame, and self condemnation; nothing but present joys; and these too frequently interrupted and always overcharged. So that setting aside the great account hereafter to be

given, the pleasures of sin are over bought, even in this world; and there is this great aggravation of the folly of them—that although its pains are eternal, yet all its pleasures are but for a season.

But now, 'tis quite otherwise in the practice of religion and virtue.—These make provision for our best and greatest interest, and secure to us a reversion of never failing happiness. Indeed they are not destitute even of a present recompense; but carry with them a sufficient reward, for all the trouble they occasion. They are pleasant in the ways, as well as in the end; for their ways are ways of pleasantness; and all their paths are peace. But 'tis the greatest and most distinguishing glory of religion, that she befriends us hereafter, and brings us peace at the last. And though the malice of men, or ill accidents, may defraud her of temporal advantages, this is a portion she can never be disinherited of. And therefore the psalmist, overlooking, as it were, all intermediate comforts of a good life, recommends it only from that which is proper and peculiar to it.—Vice, it is true, may seem pleasant and agreeable for the present, as well as virtue; but herein are they discriminated—therefore it is virtue only that ends well.—“I myself,” says the psalmist, “have seen the ungodly in great power, and flourishing like a green bay tree: but I went by, and lo, he was gone; I sought him, but his place could no where be found.” Then it follows, as a practical remark from the whole:—*keep innocency, and take heed to the thing that is right, for that shall bring a man peace at the last.*

I shall

I shall make it the farther business of the present discourse to prove, that *peace at the last*, is much more valuable than any of the present enjoyments of sin. Now, *peace at the last*, may be understood in a double sense; either for the last and concluding period of a man's life in this world: and then, *peace at last*, will be all one, with peace at the hour of death.—Or else, for the last and unchangeable state of man, in another world: and then, *peace at the last*, will be all one with everlasting peace.

I shall consider the proposition in both senses. And first, for peace at the hour of death; the inestimable value of which, though none are so well able to judge of, as they who are really and actually concerned in that dreadful moment; yet, we may have some knowledge of it, by considering what it is to die, and how miserable the condition of those is, who have lived so ill as to want this peace at the hour of death. And first, let us consider (what I fear we seldom do) what it is to dye. Death is a thing of a strange and dreadful consideration: dreadful in itself, as it is a dissolution of nature; the manner of which we do not know, we mightily fear. But much more so, in its issue and consequences, which is both great and doubtful: for upon this, depends more, than upon the whole besides. Indeed, the loss of life, and the pains and agonies wherewith it is lost, are the least part of death.—This indeed, is the whole of it to brute and irrational creatures: they suffer pain for a while, then resign their breath, and lose the sense and remembrance both of pain and pleasure.

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pleasure at once.—But to the dying man, death appears in another light and with another aspect. He is further to consider, that he is just now launching out into the fathomless pit of eternity—that he is entering upon a new, strange, dark, and withal, unalterable state of things—that he shall be, in a few minutes, what at present he has no notion of, and what he must be for ever—that he is now about to throw his last and great cast; and be resolved, once for all, of his whole condition;—that he is now passing from time to eternity, eternity of happiness or misery. And what a dreadful moment must that needs be, which a little precedes this great transaction. When a man stands upon the very edge and brink of the precipice, just upon turning off, and has the great gulph of eternity in view.—Nothing, certainly, can be more dreadful than this; except that very point that divides time from eternity; the end of the former and the beginning of the latter, actually determines the business of our happiness or damnation. And now, since to die, is no less a thing in its consequence, than to be either saved or damned; to be actually happy, or eternally miserable; it cannot sure, but be of vast importance to a man, to consider, which of these two is like to be his lot, when he is just about to try one of them. Nay indeed, it will then nearly concern him, to be pretty well assured of the welfare of his future state: then, if ever, he will rightly understand the inestimable price of a quiet conscience, of a satisfied mind, and of a hope full of glory and immortality: then, if ever he will, that that, which was
always

always a continual feast, is now a sovereign cordial and the food of angels: for never, certainly, is peace and comfort more seasonable than at this present instant—never so much need of it, and never so much value to be set upon it;—never can it more avail us to be satisfied concerning our final condition, then when we are just entering upon it;—never more refreshing to have some few beams of light, than when we are passing through the dark valley and shadow of death. Then therefore if ever, we shall value this rich pearl, a good conscience and be well content; if we had parted with all our substance for the purchase of it.—We shall then be fully convinced how much it outweighs all the temporary pleasures of sin; nay, and the severities of virtue too: and that if our whole life had been one continued act of penance and austerity, it would have been abundantly recompensed by the satisfaction and consolation of this one moment. And without question, it must be an unspeakable satisfaction to a dying man, when, if he looks backwards, he sees a life well spent; if forwards, he has a clear prospect before him of life and glory; and when he can say with good king Hezekiah, “remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee with truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.” And with the great apostle, when within view of his dissolution, “I have fought a good fight, and have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of riches, which God the righteous judge shall give me at that day.” I say, what

what an unspeakable satisfaction must it be for a man in his last hour, when he is taking leave of his body, and shaking hands with the whole world; when all are sad about him and concerned for him, then to consider, that there is a better state, which through Christ, he has an indisputable title to: that when his earthly tabernacle is dissolved, he has a building of God, an house made without hands, eternal in the heavens: that when he shall cease to live with men, he shall dwell with God and converse with angels; in short, that he is to leave nothing but vanities and shadows behind him; and that he has the solid and real happiness of a whole eternity before him.

What a mild and unterrifying thing is death to such a man as this; and with what serenity and cheerfulness does he entertain its summons. He can receive the sentence of death without trembling; and its warnings are no more to him, than was the voice of God to Moses, when he said to him, get thee up to mount Nebo and die there. For now he feels the approach of that salvation with joy, which he had before wrought out with fear and trembling; and can lay down his body with a holy hope, having possessed it in sanctification and honour. And what a happy state of mind is this;—how far exceeding all the common objects of desire and envy, and all those pleasures of sin, for whose sake it is yet frequently put to the hazard, and too often foolishly exchanged. To *live* with peace of conscience is a singular happiness, but much more to die with it: then if ever, tis a peace that passeth all understanding; fo

so great reason had Balaam for that passionate wish of his, "let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." But this we shall be farther convinced of by considering.—

Secondly, The miserable condition of those, who want this peace at the hour of death. This may be conceived in a double degree, either by way of doubt or distrust, or by way of downright despair.

We will suppose then, in the first place, a man placed on his death bed, who has led his life so indifferently, or repented so lately or imperfectly, that it is matter of reasonable question, whether he has an interest in the new covenant or no.—What a strange sort of suspense must such a man be in! How wretchedly must his mind be tormented! What a disconsolate, what a damping thought must it be, for such a man to consider, that he is now going out of the world, but he does not know whither; that there are two states of eternity; but he does not know which shall fall to his lot; nor when his soul is dislodged from his body, who shall give her the first greeting, an angel or a devil. And how must such an uncertain soul tremble and be confounded, in this her dark passage:—'tis a terrible thing, even to be doubtful, in an affair of such vast moment!

But if a man, by reason of the notorious enormity of life, is so far a stranger to this peace, as to be in utter despair of his salvation; his condition then is so miserable, that no words can express. With what amazement will he then look both backward and forward upon his sins, and his approaching eternity;

nity: and how full of indignation will he be against himself, for neglecting, when he had so many opportunities, the things that belong to his peace; and which he now perceives to be for ever hid from his eye. The memory of a sinful life is always tormenting, whatever there may be in the present enjoyment of it: and the expectation of judgment is always terrible:—but never do either of them appear in their true colours, till a man comes to die.—Then he begins to have a sense and apprehension of them, somewhat like that our Saviour had in the garden, which put him into an agony, and sweat of blood.

When a man comes within view of eternity, then will he be most concerned for his misuse of time. The scripture compares a wicked man to a troubled sea, always working and uneasy; but about the time of death, he is all over storm and tempest: who can express the disturbance and confusion he then feels. For a man to think he is just going to give an account before God of such a life, as he cannot reflect upon privately without shame and amazement: and to be sentenced to a place of torment, from whence there is no redemption; to think that he has lived idly and insignificantly, wickedly and unaccountably; and neglected that only time of probation, that only opportunity of happiness allowed him—an opportunity that was procured him at no less a rate than the death of his Saviour; and which was denied to angels that sinned:—to think that he has neglected so great salvation, and that now he must be miserable and undone for ever, when with ease,
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he might have been for ever happy ! And all this, for the sake of some little trifling interests or pleasures; for dreams and shadows; for that which never was considerable, and now is of no value at all;—What can be more afflicting than this? How can any man support himself under the agony of such a consideration? For it is a state of mind, full of the utmost darkness, and but one remove from the misery of damnation !

And now I think, from this description of horror, it may with ease be conceived, what an invaluable blessing and happiness it is, *to have peace at the last*—I mean, at our last hour. If there be any one that is not enough satisfied with it, let him ask a dying man the question, and then remain an infidel if he can.

I now consider *peace at the last*, as it signifies everlasting peace, or the peace of the last and unchangeable state of man in the other world. But this is that peace which passeth all understanding, all conception, and all expression; and between which and any thing of this world, there is no proportion. What the apostle says of the sufferings, is as true of the pleasures and enjoyments of this present world: they are neither of them worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. I may therefore omit any further enlargement upon this, as infinitely beyond our comprehension; and conclude this discourse with this brief exhortation.

That as time itself is short, so the time of man is much shorter.—That eternity has neither end nor change; and every man is hastening to his eternity and unchangeable state; and therefore it infi-

nitely concerns us all, so to live, while we sojourn in this world, that when we come to die, we may support and comfort ourselves in that dreadful hour, with these joyous reflections:—that we have past our days in uprightness and innocence; and, that henceforth, we have a fair prospect of future glory, and happiness to all eternity!

SERMON

SERMON VI.

ON WHITSUNDAY.

Acts ii. 1.

And when the day of pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord, in one place.

IT hath been the universal custom of the Church of Christ, to celebrate this day in commemoration of the miraculous mission of the Holy Ghost.—The history whereof is here given by St. Luke, in a brief narration in this chapter; describing the time, when it was, and the persons *to whom*; with the *manner how*, and the effects thereof, &c.

The first expresseth two particulars.—The time of the descent of the Holy Ghost.—The persons on whom he descended, and the estate in which they were.—For the time of this solemn mission, and miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost.—The text saith it was so, *when the day of pentecost was fully come*.—This was a jewish festival, so called, because it was ever kept on the fiftieth day after the feast of the passover.

There were among the jews, three more especially solemn anniversary festivals observed.—The feast of passover, on the second day of which feast, the first fruits of the harvest were offered unto God, viz. the first fruits of the barley which was sooner ripe than the wheat.—The feast of pentecost, when they offered the first fruits of their wheat.—The feast

feast of tabernacles, which was after the compleating of the harvest and vintage.—These three feasts did excellently represent and signify unto us the three degrees of our salvation.—Our redemption, representeth in the feast of passover, in which the paschal lamb was slain—this type of Christ; by whose precious blood, as of a lamb without spot or blemish, we are redeemed.—Our regeneration and sanctification, by the first fruits and earnest of the spirit, represented by offering the first fruits of the earth.—Our glorification, which was represented in that most joyful solemnity of the feast of tabernacles, which in the end of the year, after they had finished the labour of harvest and vintage, was celebrated by the israelites with much gladness and rejoicing.

Now of these three feasts, pentecost was the middle one; ordained especially for the commemoration of two great benefits, viz. the promulgation of the law on mount Sinai; for, it was fifty days after the feast of the passover, that the israelites came unto mount Sinai, and then and there received the law; and therefore kept as a memorable and solemn feast.—The entrance into, and possession of the land of Canaan.—This is clear from Deuteronomy, where the israelites were, when they came into, and possessed that holy land; to take the first of all the fruits of the earth, and put it in a basket, and bring it into the place which the Lord should chuse to place his name there; making confession of the exile and misery, in the house of bondage, in the land of Egypt; and praising God for his great power, and goodness, and mercy, in bringing them from thence into the land of Canaan, flowing with milk and honey.

There was indeed, offered at the feast of *passover*, on the morrow after the Sabbath, the first finish of the harvest; but it was a single sheaf of barley, offered in the name of all the people of Israel, and not by each one severally. — But at the festival of *pentecost*, all the israelites, at least some that were deputed from every city, brought of the first of the fruits unto Jerusalem; with singing and instruments of music; and there offered them up unto the Lord.

Now on this day, on which the jews commemorated these two great benefits and blessings, viz. the promulgation of the law, and the inheritance of the land of Canaan; by the oblation of the first fruits, it pleased God to manifest this wonderful mystery of the descent of the Holy Ghost.

But why, may you ask, at this very time of *pentecost*, would God thus pour out his spirit in this miraculous mission. — I answer (probably) in general. — For the greater manifestation and celebrity of the miracle, which was certainly much more eminent and illustrious; being at such a season, and at so great a solemn feast: for then there was a great confluence of people from divers parts; and the fame and report of the miracle, would be the more spread abroad and divulged. — Therefore, the Holy Ghost appeared so visibly, that the miracle of his mission might not be obscure, but published to the benefit of the world; and therefore, most fitly, at such time, amid so great an appearance and assembly of people, which resorted to Jerusalem at the feast of *pentecost*.

More particularly to hold an harmony and correspondence with those memorable things which were then celebrated; and to shew how those typical

cal ceremonies were then accomplished, in the substantial and plentiful effusions of the gifts and graces of the holy Spirit. As the giving of the law was then solemnised fifty days after the passover, and their departure from Egypt; and so, in proportion, answerably hereunto, the very same day is accomplished that prophecy:—"out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Now was the promulgation of the gospel, called by St. James, the royal law, as given by Christ, our King; and written in the hearts of his servants by the Holy Ghost. Then was the law given by the ministration of angels; and given in terror, with lightnings and thunder; ordained indeed unto life—"being holy and just and good;" but being weak through the flesh, it became no other than a killing letter, and ministration of death; exacting the debt of universal obedience; and denouncing a curse to every transgression and irritating and provoking lust. But now, on the christian pentecost, was the law of Christ, or the gospel, given by the descent of the Holy Ghost from heaven; not in terrors of lightning and thunder; but in gentle, yet plentiful effusions of his grace and gifts, with great joy sitting on the heads and dwelling in the hearts of his saints.

This is the first reason, as to parallel the time, so to shadow out the great difference between the law and the gospel; that being given by the disposition of angels; engraven in tables of stone; written by the finger of God; and this, the ministration of the spirit; writing it, not on tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart.

And

And as this festival was instituted among the jews, in remembrance of the giving of the law; so has it also a memorial of their introduction into the holy land, by the conduct of Joshua.—And answerably hereunto, it pleased God at this time to send his holy spirit; who, like Joshua, is our leader and captain; bringing us to the inheritance of the heavenly Canaan, of which that earthly was a type. For, as Moses, after he had freed the israelites from the Egyptian bondage, departed this life, and was received into heaven, leaving behind him Joshua, to go before and lead them into the promised land: so Christ, our redeemer, after he had delivered us from the hands of our spiritual enemies, by the merit of his passion, and purchased our peace and reconciliation with God, and right to eternal life, and was taken up into Heaven, and received into glory; he sent the Holy Ghost to be our comforter, and to lead us into all truth, and to abide with us, until he hath brought us through the Jordan of death, into the possession of that heavenly Canaan, and everlasting life.

On the day of pentecost they offered the two *wave loaves*, called *the bread of the first fruits*, unto the Lord; which were, as a pledge and assurance of a blessed in-gathering of the following harvest. In like sort, as at this time, the lord of the harvest so disposing it, the apostle, by the assistance and effectual working of the spirit, offered the first-fruits of their harvest unto the Lord; For the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls: which was also an earnest and pledge of the full gathering in of the whole harvest, in God's appointed time.

For

For these reasons, and in these respects, we see the congruity of the mission of the spirit, when the day of pentecost was fully come; and that this circumstance of time hath its weight, and deserves our consideration.

As for the persons on whom the Holy Spirit so miraculously descended, on the day of this great pentecost, they are not here particularly expressed: it is not said, whether they were the apostles only, or the other disciples also; the number of whose names together were about an hundred and twenty: but it is most probable that they were the apostles only—for of them the evangelist has spoken just before; who, after he had said that Matthias was chosen by lot into the place of Judas, and was numbered with the eleven apostles, now immediately adds, that they were all assembled together in one place.

This is certain, that St. Luke tells us only, that the Lord commanded his apostles to wait for the baptism of the spirit in Jerusalem. He speaks not of any others. And the excellency of their ministry seems to require, in some sort, that they should have received this grace, before all others. For they were twelve beams of the sun of righteousness, or twelve great torches of the truth, enlightening the whole world. They were, as the twelve patriarchs of the new testament, to be consecrated as oecumenical pastors throughout all the earth. They were, as the twelve wells of water in Elim, from whence the crystal streams of the water of life, were to be derived into all parts. They were as the twelve stars in the crown of the woman which was cloathed with the sun, and the moon,

under her feet: And as the twelve precious stones in the foundation of the celestial Jerusalem. On this consideration we may justly incline to the opinion of those, who hold, that the holy spirit descended at first upon the Apostles only.

Howsoever that be, the text plainly informs us, that those blessed faithful souls, to whom the holy spirit, at this time, communicated himself, "were all with one accord in one place." This shews us their unanimity and concord. This qualification of these persons is here recorded, doubtless, as matter of instruction to us, and a remarkable example for our imitation. As they waited for the spirit, so they were rightly disposed to receive the spirit, "being with one accord." Now, upon this point, we may very profitably observe, into what souls the heavenly spirit descends:—those who are in holy unity—those whom spiritual love ties and holds fast together, in sweet peace and concord, and mutual amity; these he cherishes with his healthful and comfortable fire; these he honours with his blessed presence.—It is to these that the Lord promises him:—"If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my father, which is in Heaven: for where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them." It is to these that the prophet had long before promised blessing and life for their portion; the sacred unction of the sanctuary of God, and the dew of his mountains. This holy spirit, the only giver of all graces, loveth peace and kindness.—He descends not, dwells not, but in those hearts where

he finds this;—he shuns and flies from fierce and cruel souls, whom hatred and discord, envy and malice do possess, and fill with continual trouble : and as the scripture represents him in the vision of Elijah, he comes and delights, not in whirlwinds and flames, in spirits of fire, and the violences of passion; but, in a quiet and serene spirit, in a calm and meek heart, which an humble and serene charity preserves in eternal peace.

Let us therefore labour to be of one accord, that we may be the more receptive of this blessed spirit. Let us, at all times, bear about with us that badge of christianity, holy charity; and be of one heart and one soul, as the multitude of them that believed; and study to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

This shews us their society and consort; the effect and consequences of the former:—they were all in one, or the same place, viz. an upper room in an house in Jerusalem, where they all waited for the promise of their father, according to Christ's command, and were now associated in one place. Now from this commendable practice of the mutual society, which was so happily successful in the effusion of the spirit, we may observe this point of instruction to our edification.

That for christians to associate themselves in one and the same place, for the worship of God, and the exercise of religious duties, is a thing very acceptable to God, and advantageous to ourselves. This cannot but be acceptable to God, because it is an effect or evidence of love, peace, and unanimity; which is most pleasing to God, who is called

led Love, and stiled the God of Peace. It is advantageous to us, because God hath graciously promised to be present with his people, more especially when they are gathered together in his name, to worship him. The experience of which, how signally it was made good, in the most plentiful and wonderful effusions of the Holy Ghost:—at this time the narration of the evangelist here demonstrates:—"let us not then forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is:" for many scandalously neglect the public congregation, staying idly at home; neither frequenting this, nor any other place of worship; choosing either to walk about their grounds, or sit in an alehouse, than pay their duty and devotions to God, their Creator, and Preserver; and who expects from them the services of their whole lives. How can such expect his blessing in this world; or what assurance can they have of being happy in the next? Some despise these public assemblies, out of a proud conceit, that they know enough already, and need not be taught any more; imagining they know as much as can be taught them:—if it be so, they are very knowing indeed! But I am afraid such arrogance and presumption is no small argument of their folly and ignorance. If any shall say, for their excuse, that they can privately read the sermon, and other good books at home by themselves:—to such I reply, what will their reading profit them, if the holy spirit do not assist them? And he will not surely assist those with his grace, who do unworthily reject the means which he hath especially ordained. It is indeed profitable

able and commendable to read a sermon; and other good books at home; but then, the use of this reading, is not to slight and neglect them in the assemblies and ministry of the word; "and to despise prophesying; which the apostle tells us, is the way to quench the spirit;" but to try and examine what we have heard or learned, and to know whether those things are so. Again, many neglect to assemble themselves together in due places, resorting to private conventicles; and so dividing the church of God. Whereas we see here, that the disciples met and continued, all of them, together in one place; all that were in Jerusalem, within the same precincts.—They made no divisions or separations, like too many among us, who will not all come to one place to join in prayer, and other duties of religion, with their fellow christians, who live in the same parish, within the same bounds and limits. But surely in this their scism, they are not led by the spirit of God, who is love; and maketh men to be of one mind in an house. Well, let us pity and pray for them, that they may return to a better mind; and that they may be convinced of their error and sinful divisions, and may be redeemed to the society and communion of the church. And, as for ourselves, let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together in the church of God, in due time and place: but let us, with David, be glad when they say unto us, let us go into the house of the Lord; thither let us go with the rest of God's people, rejoicing and giving thanks for the name of the Lord.

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In a word, let us imitate the union and concord of the apostles, if we would participate of their heavenly baptism. Let us associate and persevere together in prayers, and other holy exercises of religion; and banishing from the midst of us, all discord and hatred, and the troubles and confusion which it causeth. Let us all, with one accord, expect with patience and joy, and love, the accomplishment of the precious promises of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is that to which also the mystery of the holy table doth oblige us, to which we are invited. The bread, made up of many grains into one mass or lump; and the wine, consisting of many grapes, in the same liquor, express the resemblance of our union, in one body, in Jesus Christ. If nature, or fortune, as they speak, have divided us, let the hand and voice of the Lord unite us—let the hope of his grace assemble us together in his holy worship; and let us be wholly employed in the same design, and wholly occupied in the same business. If he sees us in this estate, joy and happiness shall come, yea he will hasten the time of it; and shed abroad upon us the graces and consolations of his holy spirit.

Now the God of patience and consolation, grant you to be like minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus; that ye may, with one mind, and one mouth, glorify God, even the father of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON VII.

ON A RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL LIFE.

JOHN vi. 55.

For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

AS the corporal and animal life is sustained and nourished by corporal meat and drink; so whatsoever our soul hath of vigour and force for the things of the kingdom of heaven; whatsoever spiritual life it hath; and whatsoever it hath of nourishment, subsistence, and progress, in the love of God and in all christian virtues;—that it draws and receives from Jesus Christ, as offered in sacrifice to God, for us. And this is to be remarked, that here, is treated of a spiritual life, and of the life of the soul; and that such as is the act of the mouth and corporal eating, for the nourishment of the body, the same are the acts of faith, and the meditations of the understanding, and the affection of the heart for the life of the soul.

So it is, that meat and drink must be proportioned to the life, which should be given and maintained by them. Now the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, as offered to God on the cross, have all the proportion and fitness, that could be required, to the eternal life of our souls; in as much, as they are the most worthy price thereof; and that it is impossible the holy Father should not be fully

fully appeased and satisfied by this flesh and blood. This flesh and blood offered in sacrifice for us on the cross, are the objects in which, God with the utmost complacence, the most entire obedience, and perfect charity of his son ; and by the contentment and satisfaction he took therein, he blotteth out all that cause of wrath he had against our sins ; and sendeth in the good favour of this flesh and this blood, an odour of an entire appeasement. Therefore, the poor sinner, whose soul, through the fear of God's anger, and the despair of salvation, lay languishing and dying, as in an extreme atrophy; no sooner hears the gospel, representing the flesh and the blood of Jesus Christ the very son of God, offered in ransom to God for sinners; but, if he believes, he finds his heart restored and vivified, as by a divine meat and holy drink—which revives him, raises him up, and sets him again on foot. His heart quite wounded and bruised, as it were before, is now full of hope and joy and vigour. And whereas before, being wholly frightened with the wrath and curse of God, he sought to hide himself, as Adam did, from the presence of God; he can now dare to say, who shall condemn—it is Christ that died. Considering this holy priest presenting to God his body and blood, to be a propitiation for sins; he sees the throne of God to be a throne of grace, whither he goes with assurance to find grace and mercy.

And if wine be a drink which cheereth the heart of man; judge ye by the joy which the poor sinner receiveth, in seeing himself absolved from all his sins, through the blood of Jesus Christ; if, or whether,

whether, this blood be not the drink of the soul, and verily, whence can proceed that joy, which the scripture calls unspeakable and glorious, but from hence, that we feel ourselves justified by faith. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Surely, never did any drink or liquor fill the spirit of the prophet David with so much joy, as the sense of the peace of God, and remission of his sins gave him, when he cried out, blessed is he, whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered—blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity. Therefore if it be said, “give strong drink unto them that are ready to perish, and wine to those that be of heavy hearts,” we may say, that the blood of Jesus Christ is that wine and that strong drink, which must be given to him that is dying. To see the wrath of God and that condemnation, which his sins have drawn upon him,—and then, if by faith in this blood, he comes to repentance, he will see himself, a criminal as he was, to become the child of God, and made an heir of the kingdom of heaven.

But this is not all the virtue of this truly meat and drink; for after that the sinner hath been once restored by it, and raised up from the state of death and wrath, wherein he was lying; he is then nourished by it, and his soul draws its healthful constitution from it, and if I may so speak, its spiritual substance.—For when the sinner, in whom sin and vice had reigned, and who was abandoned to his lusts, comes to believe in Jesus Christ, he is obliged to believe the truth of that which is
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said, " God justifieth the ungodly, for, till then, he was wicked, and without works of righteousness and holiness; and therefore finding his soul is, even till then, naked and destitute of christian virtue and good works; he applies himself, to give it the substance and fullness of the love of God and of his neighbour; and to cloath it with the new man, created after God in righteousness and holiness." Now herein it is, that the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, which hath raised him up in hope of grace and mercy, and vivified him, shall be found to be also *meat and drink*; whereby the soul shall receive the good estate of the image of God, and the substance of all christian virtues.

First, In general, when we shall contemplate the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ on the cross, under the wrath of God against our sins; *this flesh* of the very son of God pierced and put to death; and *his blood* shed in the vengeance God took for our offences; shall we not hate sin and iniquity, as a thing so execrable, that to expiate it, there was need that the very son of God, should be clothed with flesh and blood and suffer death. Shall not the believing sinner look on his own sins as the nails which fastened the son of God to the cross, and as the spear which pierced his sacred side? And shall we not say and conclude thus; if this flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, were the object of the wrath of God against my sins, it must needs be, that I should hate my sins and renounce them! Otherwise, it would not be to believe that Jesus Christ died for my sins, and that sin were worthy of the extreme hatred of God. So again—if our concupiscence tempt us, and is found moved to some sin and wickedness;

edness; the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, if we set them before our eyes, will withdraw us from it, and fortify our souls in the fear of God.

Secondly, If the exceeding love that any one bears to us, be capable of causing in us, some love towards the person who so loves us; and if a most signal and eminent benefit be capable of raising in us gratitude and affection towards our benefactor; this flesh and blood offered on the cross, for us; are they not objects wherein we may clearly behold the superlative and transcendent love of the holy Father, and of his son Jesus Christ towards us? Of the heavenly father, that he would deliver his well beloved Son unto death for us; and of the Son, that he hath not spared his life and his blood, even for us miserable sinners; and his enemies in our minds by wicked works. Certainly we should say—scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet, peradventure for a good man, some will even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. And so we see, that in the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, there is the true nourishment of our souls in the love of God; that is, they are powerful motives of our souls to love God, and to study all our lives to please him:—otherwise we are harder than brass, and more insensible than rocks and marbles.

Thirdly, Whereas the love of this world is a perpetual temptation to us; by the lust of the flesh; the lust of the eyes; and the pride of life: what is there that can more incite us to the contempt of the world, and all the things that are in it, than the consideration of the cross of Jesus Christ:—

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where we see that his flesh was mortified and deprived of all life, in which he had used this world, its meat, its drink, its vestement, and its air? Without doubt, if, when the wealth, and the pleasures, and the glory of this world, tempt us, we look on the flesh of Jesus Christ, wounded and deprived of all the goods of this life, upon the cross; there will be formed in our hearts a contempt and disdain of all that which glitters so in the eyes of worldlings; and of all the carnal pleasures in which they place the sovereign good. The flesh of Jesus Christ crucified, being imprinted in our souls, will make us crucify the flesh, with the lusts and affections thereof.

And if we come to particularize christian virtues, it is the impression of Jesus Christ upon our souls (of the flesh and blood) which will form them.—As for example.—It will oblige us to charity and beneficence to the poor and afflicted. For how can you refuse to the members of Jesus Christ, some assistance; money, nourishment, and cloathing, if we consider that in this flesh and blood Jesus Christ refused not his own life, neither for them nor for us. And it is from the love of Jesus Christ, manifested on the cross, that the scripture draws its principal arguments to move us to love. “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering, and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be a propitiation for our sins; —“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

And as for meekness, to forgive our neighbours
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the offences we have received from them—is it not also the impression in our spirits of Jesus Christ, stretched out on the cross for us, who had offended him, which forms us to this virtue? For if he hath pardoned us our offences in so great number, and so heinous; even us who were infinitely inferior to him, and were indebted to him for our being, and all our well-being:—how can we refuse to pardon some offences to our neighbours, who have not their being from us, who are equal to us in nature, and to whom we are obliged, as being “our flesh and our blood?” And so the scripture propounds to us the pardon that God gives us, as an example which should always be set before our eyes.—“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved; bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long sufferings; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another,—if any man have a quarrel against any—even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye;”—and again, let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.—“You see how we must perpetually digest in our souls Jesus Christ, crucified, to be nourished thereby, and strengthened in christian virtues, and in all good works.

And if we are in adversities and afflictions, and even in death itself, how admirable is the force and vigour which is conveyed to us from the flesh of Jesus Christ, suffering and dying on the cross. It will be a restorative to our souls, which will support them, and fill them with courage and constancy, that we may finish our course, and obtain the victory! We read, that when Elijah was quite wearied in his body, and perplexed in his spirit; because

because of the persecution of Ahab; a cake and a cruse of water, which the angel brought him, gave him strength and vigour again.—But what was this cake and cruse of water, in comparison of the heavenly meat and divine drink of the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, to fortify us in the greatest adversities! All afflictions now are but chastisements and corrections from the fatherly hand of God; proofs of our faith and obedience, and exercises of patience; medicines of the soul, to purge it of its sins and lusts, as of evil humours, and to advance it in holiness; means and instructions to make us die to the world, and live unto God. Hence it comes to pass, that we have not only patience, but we glory also in tribulations:—“and it is vigour, drawn from the death of Christ,” which the apostle expresses—“who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”

And not only in the occasion of persecution, but also out of it:—if death presents itself to the faithful, in diseases, old age, and natural ways; they see that the death of Jesus Christ hath swallowed up death in victory, and hath made of our death, a passage to life for our souls; and for our bodies, a preparative to a glorious resurrection.—Our body, which is sown in the earth as a grain, not being able to be quickened except it die. Therefore, when the believer shall perceive his life, and his flesh failing, and shall not be able to take any more meat and drink, to strengthen the
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outer man; he shall find himself powerfully strengthened in the inner man, by faith in Jesus Christ; dead for his sins, and raised again for his justification; and, as by a heavenly and divine restorative, shall be full of strength, and say as Job —“ I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day, upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body; yet, in my flesh, shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.”—And as St. Paul—“ I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”—“ In this faith he shall rejoice himself in God, and shall see the heavens opened, and resign his spirit with peace into the hands of his Saviour: and when his bodily eyes shall be quite obscured with the darkness of death, he shall have the eyes of his understanding enlightened, to know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.” Such shall be the force of this heavenly *meat and drink*, wherewith the believer shall be nourished by faith. You see how the *flesh and blood* of Jesus Christ, giving to the soul so much force and vigour, and all that it hath of spiritual life, are its *meat and drink*, and that indeed, truly so, which is the next word to be considered:—how the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, are *meat and drink*. The carnal truth is that of the effects which things carnal and terrene produce, properly and according to their earthly and carnal nature.

“ Spiritual truth,” is that which agrees to things spiritual and divine, by analogy, convenience,

nience, similitude, and compassion of their spiritual effects; with the effects of things earthly and carnal. For all things spiritual, and concerning the kingdom of heaven, which in holy scripture are called by the names of things carnal and terrene; have the truth thereof spiritualized, that is, by true similitude and comparison. So, Jesus Christ in the gospel, is called the light—the way—and a door; that is, the light which enlightens our souls; the way which leads us to the father; and the door which introduceth us into heaven; by analogy and resemblance to the light of the air, and to ways and doors of houses here below. And in things of this nature Jesus Christ useth the word true—"I am the true vine." And in John he is called "The light of men." Now by what truth is he the light and the vine? Is it by the truth proper and carnal? No, but by the truth spiritual, as being and doing to our souls that which the natural and corporal light doth and is to our bodies, and a vine to its branches. In like sort, Jesus Christ calleth conversion "a birth;" which is not so, but by the spiritual truth of similitude and comparison. Which Nicodemus, not comprehending, and resting in the carnal truth, demanded, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? And so, those who hearing Jesus Christ speak of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, said, "how can this man give us his flesh to eat? This is an hard saying, who can hear it? They rested in the carnal truth, as Nicodemus did. And Christ opposeth to their understanding the spiritual truth.

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It is the spirit that quickeneth—you must understand these things spiritually, not carnally. “Do not grossly stop at my material flesh, nor at the corporal manner of eating, which are things unprofitable for the soul, but apprehend in my flesh that which is spiritual and quickening therein;” that it is the flesh of the son of the living God; and that, in it, he suffered death and expiated sin, and fulfilled all righteousness. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life; must be understood spiritually, and so are the words of life.

This is evident in the sacrament, where God hath used terrene and corporeal elements for signs of things spiritual and celestial. For the signs there have their carnal verity, in effects agreeable to their corporal and carnal nature: and the thing signified, its spiritual truth in effects correspondent to its spiritual nature. Thus in baptism; the water according to the carnal truth, washes the filth of the body, and the blood of Jesus Christ and his spirit, washes the soul from its sins and vices, according to the spirit of truth. And so, in the holy supper, the bread and wine nourish the body, according to the carnal truth of their nature; and the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, as offered to God in sacrifice for our sins, nourish our souls according to the spiritual truth of their nature.

Hereunto may be added, that the things of the kingdom of Heaven, under the gospel, should answer to the carnal and terrene, under the law, by a spiritual truth; according to St. John—“the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers

pers shall worship the father, in spirit, and in truth; that is, in spiritual truth.—As then, the law had carnal and corporal eating of the paschal lamb, and of the flesh of the sacrifices; so the gospel should have the spiritual manducation of Jesus Christ our lamb, sacrificed for us; and as there the mouth and stomach acted, so here, faith should act; “that Christ should dwell in our hearts, by faith.”

But to shew further, how much cause our Lord had to say, *that his flesh was meat indeed, and his blood was drink indeed*, it must be observed:—That as things spiritual and moral are of a more noble kind, and of a more excellent nature, than things terrene and carnal; so they do in their effects, surmount the truth of carnal and terrene things, and have it in a more excellent and more eminent degree. As for example, if Jesus Christ be called light, he is more truly light than the light of the sun; for that only enlightens the eyes of our body, and only makes plain and manifest the surface of things corporal.—But Jesus Christ enlightens the eyes of our understandings, and makes us to see the things of the kingdom of heaven, and to know God himself. So, if earthly meat be truly meat to the body, Jesus Christ is yet more truly meat to the soul. For—

1. Corporal meat doth not give life, but only maintains it where it is already:—but the flesh of Jesus Christ not only maintains spiritual life, but gives it by his merit; and quickens believers.

2. Earthly food maintains life, but for a time, and hinders not death finally:—but the flesh of

Jesus Christ is meat; by which, those who eat it live for ever. "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead: this is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.

3. Earthly food extends its virtue only to the body; but Jesus Christ is meat, whose virtue so appertains to the soul, to reconcile it to God, and to sanctify it, as that it also is extended to the body; making it the temple of the Holy Ghost; and an instrument of righteousness unto God; and obtaining for it the privilege of a glorious resurrection according to John—"who so eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." And—"If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his spirit that dwelleth in you."

4. Corporal food is changed into our substance, but hath not the virtue to transform our substance into itself. But Jesus Christ is a meat which transformeth us into his likeness, viz. into the image of God in righteousness and holiness; and makes us spiritual and heavenly creatures.

5. Corporal meat is in us, and not we in it:—but the union we have with Jesus Christ, is so admirable, that he dwelleth in us, and we in him. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him;" and so it surpasses in its perfection, the union that meats have with our bodies.

Lastly, Earthly and corporal food being taken
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in excess, is hurtful; furcharging nature and being turned into superfluous humours: but the spiritual food cannot be taken with excess; but the more faith receives it, the more it advanceth us in piety and sanctification, and fills us with all the fullness of God.

Thus you see, that the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, are, by the excellency of their virtues and effects, more truly meat and drink, than earthly meat and drink.

First, We should then, be always earnestly desirous of this meat and this drink, and—"labour not so much for the meat that perisheth; but rather for that meat which endureth to everlasting life; which the son of man shall give unto you; for him hath God the father sealed." If we have Jesus Christ for our food, we have life, yea life eternal, by this heavenly food. Let us then purge our souls of the hunger and thirst of avarice, ambition, and carnal pleasures. Let us renounce worldly lusts, that we may say as the psalmist—"as the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee O God:—my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." And that we may receive the consolation which Jesus Christ gives to those that have this hungering and thirsting—"blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Secondly, Since God gives us so bountifully this meat and drink; doth it not oblige us, by his love to us, not to refuse corporal food to his children; but to give to eat to him that is hungry,

gry, and to drink to him that is thirsty; and to be merciful to the poor and needy; as our holy Father is merciful to us? For if we be unfaithful and evil stewards, of earthly goods, it is not reasonable that God should give and entrust us, with goods heavenly and spiritual.

Thirdly, It becometh in general, that all our life, our words, and our actions, should declare and testify, that we are nourished by Jesus Christ—all our conversation being truth, charity, beneficence, and purity. Those whose life and conversation is satiated with evil speaking, envy, injustice, and swearing, declare that they nourish their souls with poisons to destroy them, and not with Jesus Christ. It becometh therefore, that our lives testify that Jesus Christ dwells in us; and that we may say with St. Paul—"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

And having thus had the flesh of Jesus Christ for our meat, and his blood for our drink, we shall be able to say, we have eaten of the true fruit, of the tree of life, which was in Paradise; according as Jesus Christ saith, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." And as heretofore, the people of Israel being in the wilderness, God sent them manna, the bread of Heaven—so, being in this world as in a wilderness, he hath given us to eat of the hidden manna, the true bread which came down from Heaven.

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And we shall have this consolation, that we shall one day sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven, at the nuptial feast of the Lamb; where God shall satiate us with joy in the contemplation of his face; and make us drink of the rivers of his pleasures, and give us those joys which are at his right hand for evermore.

Amen.

SERMON VIII.

ON JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

ROM. viii. 1.

There is, therefore, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

THIS chapter is the conclusion of the former treatise of justification, wherein the apostle summarily collects the excellent state of a christian, justified by faith in Christ; declaring it to be such, that there is no condemnation to him, nor can any evil hurt him; and because there are but two evils in this life which hurt us—sin that remains in us, and affliction that follows us; against both these he arms the justified man: against the first to v. 17, and the second to v. 31.

So that the words, as in themselves observable, contain a consolatory proposition, or comfortable conclusion against the fear of God's wrath, justice, judgment, death, hell, and damnation—a remedy against these scruples, which God's children make against the certainty of their own election—a means whereby to answer and repel all those objections whereby the devil would inveigle us, as if we did not belong to God: nay, they are an undoubted touchstone, whereby we may discern and try, whether we are not freed from condemnation; for, to them that are in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation; as many as are in him are freed from the same; even as many as walk, not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

In the text, these two particulars are contained.

1. Here is a consolatory proposition, or a comfortable conclusion against the fear of God's wrath, judgment, death, hell, and everlasting condemnation.

2. A limitation to whom there is no condemnation, not to those who walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

First, To begin with the comfortable conclusion, &c. that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.—Now condemnation, is a pronouncing of offenders guilty upon the conviction of an offence; yet the text, by their faith and repentance, frees them from the damnatory sentence, which pronounceth a curse to every malefactor. And though it is granted all do sin, yet sin doth not reign in them, though they find themselves after a sort, wretched and miserable; so that now and then they complain lamentably, yet there is no condemnation to them; for they are free both from the guilt and punishment due thereunto; though they find with the apostle, a law in their members rebelling against the law in their mind—yet saith he, there is no condemnation for me, as being accepted of God through Christ, who has already bore my sins, and the punishment due to them; answering the justice of God, by fully satisfying for them; yea, cancelling the bond that did witness his guilt, accusing and binding him over to the punishment thereof. But our deliverance is obtained, procured, and purchased, in and through Christ, which is implied in that of our apostle to Timothy, where he says, “who
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hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our work, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus"—for so much his very name importeth.

Hence comes our hope, and help, and aid against our natural corruptions; with the assurance of our full and perfect freedom therefrom; all which, is not grounded upon our inherent holiness, merit of works, or any thing that we ourselves can do, but only upon the merits and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; for it is his blood that cleanseth us from all sin. Never shall the soul of any mortal, being troubled in respect of sin, and feeling the weight and burden of it lying heavy upon him, find ease, comfort, and freedom, but in and through Christ; whoso seeketh to any other, loseth his labour; and in digging rotten cisterns to themselves, forsake the fountain of living waters. Long might Baal's priests have called upon him before he could have heard them; and long may we seek comfort against our sins, without this remedy, and go without it. So that, it is by Christ, we regain all those advantages which sin had forfeited and lost; we are saved from that eternal destruction to which Satan had made us liable; our faults are expiated by the most astonishing satisfaction of the blood of God, and our ransom paid by his bitter and opprobrious death: So that there is nothing wanting to make us happy; for we are assured of all means from God's grace, and innumerable motives to it from his promises, and the certainty of all, from his infallible reward;

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that if we trust not to God, believe not in Christ; if after all these means and motives we miscarry and miss of Heaven and happiness, we must even thank our own selves.

But grant we should feel our hearts rent in sunder with the rebellious motions of iniquity, and are grievously laden with sin, yet you, even all you I say, who now hunger and thirst after righteousness, why are you so sad? Why are you so heavy? Why are your hearts so disquieted within you? Behold here, your consolation! Behold here, your happiness! Behold here, your full satisfaction in Christ! Howsoever sin remaineth in you, yet it shall not so remain in you, as to condemn you. *There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.*

Having thus cleared this truth, let us now see and consider what are the condemnations from which the justified are freed.

Three times doth the Lord keep count against the wicked in the process of condemnation.

1. The count of their own consciences.
2. The hour of death.
3. The general day of judgement.

First, No sooner is sin committed, but there arises a guilty conscience within, which pronounceth sentence against itself; which sentence, though we endeavour to stifle, yet the voice of our disordered affections are so loud, that they hear as much as makes them inexcusable, and breeds in them a certain fear and terror, which is but the forerunner of a more fearful judgment. For there is such a sting in it, as draws shame and punishment after it; not in the open market place but in the greatest privacy of the closet. We are not

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alone, when by our selves in the closest retirement that we can find to sin in; there is an eye, an ear, a handwriting; for we have a certain law in our hearts, which upbraids our sins to us, as soon as ever we have committed them; and a wounded spirit, who can bear?

Secondly, The second count is kept in the hour of death; when the Lord doth not only repeat the former sentence, and that in a more fearful manner; but he likewise proceeds to execution; adjudging their bodies to the grave, and their souls to be banished from God's presence for ever. So that the highest pleasures he now enjoys, must be dashed with this bitter remembrance, that they must end. O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions. So that a vitious man is even tortured with a strange variety of disappointments, and weariech himself to commit iniquity, and dreads his latter end.

Thirdly, The day of judgment shall be most fearful, when all the wicked shall be condemned in God's high and supreme court of justice, and the books opened; according to which, the judge of Heaven will proceed to sentence.

The book of the law which shewed to man what he should do: Then the book of conscience, which shall then shew him what he has done: for the law will plead for the transgression of her precepts; urging, that the wicked might be punished for their unreasonable disobedience; her commands for number being but ten, so no burden to the memory; for the understanding, plain; being written in the heart of every man; and by the holiness of
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our nature received at the creation, such as we might have performed; nor any ways profitable for God that gave; but for man that received them. And then conscience shall witness against him for the breach of every precept of the law, with the circumstances of the manner, time and place—and this shall be most horrible, not only in regard of the manner, but of the irrevocable sentence of damnation—and if Moses trembled at the delivery of the law, what shall the wicked do at the execution thereof.

So that these books, by which our cause must be tried, shall be the evidences produced of mens actions in this life; the testimonies of their consciences and the infallible records of God's exact observation and remembrance. These and infinite accusations shall rise up against the wicked.—But oh! the joy of those that are in Christ Jesus! How inestimable a treasure will a good conscience be at that day! A conscience that will bear us out, and be approved of and allowed by the judge! How joyfully will they receive the sentence, "come ye blessed children, enter ye into the rest of your Father!"

Having thus vindicated this truth from the fiery darts of satan, that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Now to confirm the weak and to remove the doubts of the scrupulous, I shall offer these infallible tokens, by which we may certainly know, that we are in Christ.

God hath ordained baptism to be the outward sign of our putting on Christ; the outward means of engrafting into him, and conformity with him, in the similitude of his death and resurrection;

rection; which covenant and compact was solemnly made in the face of the congregation, and should be constantly renewed at the Lord's supper; professing, when we come to years of discretion, and acknowledging Christ to be our Saviour. By this participation of the virtue and efficacy of Christ's righteousness, apprehended by faith, we believers become one with him, and he with us:—he is our head, we are his members; and as the members are knit and united to the head, so are we as members, engrafted into Christ; and as the heat and life which is in the head, is dispersed and diffused into every member, so the life and graces which are in Christ, are through his conjunction, made proper and communicated to us.—For we, saith the apostle, “are members of his body, his flesh, and his bones; all which is comprehended by faith, wrought in us by the spirit; revealed to us by the son; delivered to us by the word of God; and sealed to us by the holy sacraments.”

They that are in Christ live a holy and sanctified life; they are such as walk, not after the flesh, but after the spirit; they live according to the motion and guidance of grace and sanctification, which is implied in that of our apostle—“if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;” which St. John explains, saying, “whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not;” that is to say, makes not a trade and common practice of sin; but his life is holy and sanctified.—So that an holy conversation is an infallible sign of our union with Christ. As the life of the body is discerned by moving, so the life of faith is known by good works. We esteem that body dead, or at least near unto death, which

which is not able to move, or do any action pertaining to the natural life; and so we may conclude that soul to be dead in sin which hath no delight or power to execute any spiritual action; but walketh and acteth after the flesh. An holy conversation must be our witness, that we live a holy and godly life. It is not the naked profession of christianity that will prove us to be in Christ; (hypocrites, for the most part, make the greatest outward shew of piety and devotion) but a sanctified life and conversation, agreeable to the word of God.

The proof of a good tree, we all know, is yielding good fruit; which every tree that does not, though otherwise ever so beautiful to the eye, shall certainly be hewn down, and cast into the fire; and yet, not every one that saith to him Lord Lord, shall be saved; but such only who observe his law, and keep his commandments. So that it clearly appears, and is a plain sign, that the owning of Jesus, and professing his doctrine, will stand us in no stead, who are not careful to conform their lives to the rules and precepts of it.

The third sign of our being in Christ, is, when we walk, even as he walked. That soldier merits the laurel who follows his commander; and that Christian deserves the everlasting crown of glory, who follows the example of Christ: he is our conquering Joshua, who conducteth us safely through the wild wilderness of this world, into the celestial career of quietness. Who would not follow such a leader—such a commander? When, by our obedience and conformity to his commands and example, we shall undoubtedly obtain that
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crown of glory, which faderh not away. The precepts he hath given us are so plain, that who-soever is obedient to them, cannot miss of salvation; he has left us such a pattern and example to follow, that if we tread in his steps, we cannot fail of Heaven and happiness. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, humble, and tender hearted.—O that our practices were answerable to our pattern! That we did live and write according to his copy! That we could live answerably to our profession! O that we would call to mind that Christ hath not satisfied for us, that we should live as we list! That he hath not redeemed us from darkness, that we should run into sin, but live according to his will in newness of life! That there were in us that which God requires at our hands; holiness in our actions, humility in our hearts, thankfulness in our persons, obedience and conformity in our lives and conversations.—Then should we be known to be true christians, when we did thus walk, even as Christ walked.

Then should we have the grace of regeneration, and sanctification wrought in us by the spirit of God; that new and spiritual disposition working in our minds wills and affections, conformity to the master Christ, and the law of God: having an earnest desire both to know and walk in all God's commandments; to be sorry for our mispent hours, with a firm resolution to return unto him with hearty prayers and contrite hearts; being resolved in all things to please God, and to be faithful servants of our ever blessed Jesus.

Thus have I given a plain account of the text, and of that comfortable conclusion, *that there is*

no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Together with God's keeping three counts of conscience, death and judgment; and likewise of those infallible signs and tokens, by which we may certainly know whether we be in Christ.

That which remains is to apply all;—and let us seriously consider the comfortable state and condition of all such as are truly in Jesus Christ.—They are free from that damnatory sentence of God, pronouncing them guilty, and adjudging those to eternal damnation who break the law.—They are freed, being accepted for righteous, and that worthy of eternal salvation.

What happiness soever can be by the art and eloquence of man expressed, or their hearts wish for, or their minds but imagine, the same and much more, is fully and truly to be found in Christ Jesus. He humbled himself to exalt us; he descended that we might ascend into Heaven; he was crucified, that we might be ransomed from the punishment of our sins; he was condemned that we might escape condemnation; which should quicken us by all means to be grafted into him, to be branches of this living vine; members of this head; and spouses married to this husband; that so, eternal joys and happiness may redound to us, who are reconciled to God, through Christ. And to quicken our endeavours hereunto, let us consider both the necessity and utility of being in Christ.

The necessity of it appears from this, because, without him we perish for ever; without him we have no right to life here or hereafter; no blessings temporal or spiritual; for unless we are in him, we are in no favour with God; and who would be
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without God's protection? Who would be without Christ, who freely confers all heavenly blessings upon us. For the utility of it, consider the blessings obtained, the life of grace, reconciliation with God, peace of conscience; common justice and equity require, that they who go the right way by living well, should be rewarded with happiness and attain their end—everlasting life! What then remains, but that I exhort every christian seriously to consider what he may attain to, provided he be not wanting to himself. There being no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, brings comfort to every child of God, to every true believer. For what need afflictions fret, cares consume, miseries molest, persecution oppress, sin, Satan, death, hell, or condemnation dismay you; my life for yours, you shall not perish. For thus saith St. John, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.—Understand you blessed of my father, your happiness and rejoice.—Hast thou good assurance that thou art in Christ? Then be confident, that, that tormenting flame, shall not touch one hair of thy head." Joyful news to a distressed soul; like the hearing of a pardon to a condemned person, "thou shalt not die but live!" So that whosoever is in Christ, shall be admitted into the presence and vision of Almighty God, the author and fountain of all pleasures, and shall there find all goodness compact together, and meet in the common centre from whence they are all drawn. Whatsoever can possibly create true comfort, he enjoys the whole, with the highest satisfaction, and the most transporting raptures of delight. When

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we shall be no longer heirs apparent, but possessors of the kingdom of Heaven; a kingdom, infinite, blissful, and eternal. Nay, we shall be made joint heirs with Jesus Christ the son of God, to reign and triumph and sit in judgement with him! And could any man desire more, unless it were to be made God himself! And who would not value this inheritance? Who would not take some pains to gain it, especially when assured "that his labour shall not be in vain." *Amen.*

SERMON IX.

ON GOOD WORKS.

GAL. VI. 7.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: For, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

IN the verse immediately going before the text, the apostle reminds the Galatians of their duty towards their pastors and teachers; in being liberal and communicative of all their good things to to him, who is by God's providence set over them; and from whom they receive the benefit of spiritual instruction. Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things: implying farther, in the next words, that in the neglect of this, as of any other acts of piety and justice, men do in the end, deceive themselves, for God will not be mocked.—*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* Though these words have some coherence with the preceding text; yet, in discoursing on them, I shall not consider them any farther, than as they may be taken for an entire sentence in themselves, containing a general instruction; wherein we have first something spoken by way of caution and admonition—*be not deceived;* and then second two truths asserted:—first, *that God will not be mocked*:—second, *that whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* For the caution or admonition here given, warning us that we deceive
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not our selves; *be not deceived*; be not mistaken; suffer not your selves to be deluded by vain words or imaginations; err not.—The word is used for an error of the mind, and is no where taken for a common light mistake; but for that which is a dangerous and fundamental error, even seducing the soul to eternal perdition! This expression seems to imply, that there are some that would extenuate their sins, thinking some to be small and venial, that may be tolerated and dispensed with; that if they perform such and such duties, it is enough for them. With Herod, who thought that so long as he heard John Baptist gladly, he might commit incest with his brother's wife. Against such like thoughts or pretences as these we are here cautioned:—*be not deceived*. The like expression we have in Corinthians, which may serve as a fit commentary for this place;—"be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of Heaven." Agreeable to this place is that in his epistle to the Ephesians; where, after the apostle had produced such another catalogue of sinners, he presently adds—"let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." There is no sin, which if we wilfully follow, and allow ourselves in, let it be accounted how it will, but will tend to our eternal misery and destruction, without true repentance, and the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

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But when we lessen and extenuate the heinousness of any sin in our minds, and take free liberty to practice it; we are then hardly ever persuaded to be truly sorry for it, or to repent and forsake it. And thus a sin, though it be but small comparatively, may prove more dangerous than one of an higher nature. Whatsoever therefore we know to be sin, and forbidden by the law of God, whether it be against the rules of piety or justice, we are carefully to avoid.—Though there may even some seeming advantage arise by impiety, by injustice, or by defrauding others of their right; yet therein we do deceive our selves as well as others. Thus it is also in reference to those duties that are incumbent on us to perform, as acts of charity and mercy, the constant attending upon God's ordinances, prayer, and the hearing of the word. Now, in reference to these things, we may persuade our selves perhaps, that there is no need of such a diligent and continual performance of them; yet the doing of them sometimes will be sufficient to keep up our reputation, and to satisfy for our frequent neglects. Besides it may be therein also we consult our own profit, ease, or pleasure—but hereby we do but miserably deceive our selves: we may deceive others by an external show of piety; but God will not be deceived. The next thing I propose to speak to from the words—*be not deceived; God is not mocked*. There can be no cheat or fallacy cast upon the Almighty:—he that is all-wise will not be deceived by such vain, silly, impotent creatures: and he that is infinite in strength can never be subjected to any human

human force. Men may indeed deceive one another, and impose upon those that are like themselves: this a very little experience in the world doth evidence; for we often see and hear of many that are led aside and deluded by the crafty insinuations of others, both in civil and secular affairs, and also in divine. Of the first, we have a noted instance in Absalom, who, it is said, stole the hearts of the men of Israel: and also—"with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing." They were not of his counsel, nor privy to his wicked conspiracy, being deluded into treason and rebellion. Thus, as to religion, it was said of Simon Magus, that he bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that he was some great one; to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest—saying, "this man is the great power of God." Thus are there many still among us, who by enthusiasm and impudent pretences to inspiration, and by immediate and larger communications of the spirit than the Scripture warranteth; or I know not what pretended light within; too often win the affections and admiration of the unthinking vulgar, and seduce and draw them into error; according to what was foretold by the apostle—"that there should be many deceivers and mockers in the last days; but God is not as man; they that deceive men, cannot by all their craft and subtlety impose upon him, who sees and understands all their devices: he often times taketh the
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wife in their own craftiness, and in the snares that they have laid for others; but the craft of the wisest can never take him." Farther,—

He will not take those that are externally christians, in name and profession only, for those that are so in reality and truth. God will not accept of a feigned repentance, for great sins committed against his infinite majesty; neither will he be pleased with a partial reformation, with external obedience only, or a formal performance of our duty. Let the hypocrite imagine what he will to himself, God is not to be deceived by an outward shew of religion and piety. Can he think to darken and obscure the understanding of the all-knowing God, by the deepest cunning and contrivance? Or can he imagine, that God beholds only the superficies of things, the varnish and colour, and not the very essence of them also? Can he think, that God, who is the searcher and trier of the reins, knows not the inmost recesses of the heart, whether it be sincere or no? Or that he takes no notice of secret sins, and private ways of fraud and injustice? Can he persuade himself, that God will not act according to what he sees and knows? That the just God will be partial in judgement? In sparing some though evil doers out of favor and affection, contrary to all right and equity? Let not any please themselves with such wicked and blasphemous conceptions. God will quickly look through all the false colours that religion is painted and covered withal, and behold all the fallacies and deceits therein. He will throw aside the outward coverings, unravel all the ac-
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tions of our lives, and behold the unsoundness and rottenness that lies hid in them. And as he will make a diligent search and scrutiny into our lives and actions, so, will he also proceed in giving righteous judgment, and in proportioning rewards and punishments according to their deserts. None shall then deceive him, in passing for what they are not. And then it will openly appear, that they who have been deceitful and hypocritical in his worship and service, have deceived and mocked themselves and not God. Which brings me to the third thing observed from the words contained in the last clause—*for, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*. This is a common proverbial expression, intelligible to all; fitted as it were, to the meanest capacity in the country dialect, of plowing and sowing; denoting thus much; that every one shall receive the recompence of his actions, and be either rewarded or punished according to the quality of his deeds done in the flesh. As a man's course of life hath been here, so shall he fare at God's tribunal hereafter.

By sowing therefore we are to understand the actions and behaviour of men in this life. By reaping the rewards or punishments that follow them, be they good or evil. And this comparison or allusion is very proper and suitable, in that our actions here are as seed that is sown. When the husbandman doth well prepare and manure his ground, and then cast good seed into it, it yields him a very plentiful increase and doubly pays him for all his labour and charge: but if he will neither order his ground, nor make use of a
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fit season, nor sow good seed, but what is mixed and adulterated, the crop will be accordingly; for he will reap no fruit but what is good for nothing; tares and chaff, briers and thorns, fit only to be cut down and cast into the fire.

Thus it is with our actions, according as they are good or evil, so will their fruits be. If we be full of good works; if we do that which is honest, virtuous, and of good report; if we cleanse ourselves from sin, and root all iniquity out of our lives; we shall then receive the fruit of our actions in a plentiful measure, which will abundantly reward all the pains and fatigues of a religious life. As it follows in the next verse; "he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit, reap life everlasting." He that lives according to the rules of the gospel; that word which the spirit of God hath dictated; that respects heavenly things more than earthly; that doth those things which tend to the glory, honour, and worship of God, and the good of others; he shall thereby inherit eternal life; not from any inherent worth or intrinsic merit in good works, but only from God's free grace and goodness, who will thus abundantly reward all our pious actions.

We acknowledge indeed, the harvest to be procured through the diligent labour of the husbandmen, but withal, to be the free blessing of God. Thus it is with eternal life, the reward of good works. They are the means which make us partakers of this blessed harvest, though not from desert, it being the gift of God.

In Hosea, the prophet exhorts us, to sow to ourselves

ourselves in righteousness and reap in mercy, that is, to do good works, and then we shall find God propitious and merciful to us in the free pardoning of all our offences. So that good works are the only way, though not the cause of happiness; for God sheweth mercy and favour, according to our works, though not for them. If they be good, they will not fail of a certain recompence.

And as this metaphor of sowing and reaping is applied to good actions in general, in the holy scriptures; intimating that they shall assuredly be rewarded; so also in particular to acts of charity. "He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." The more liberal and bountiful any one is in expending part of his estate, to supply the wants and necessities of his poor fellow creatures, thereby advancing the glory of God, and the good of his brethren, the greater recompence will he find at the hands of God, who will certainly reward all such sort of charity, and that in proportion to the several degrees of it. So also is this metaphor applied to acts of contrition. To godly sorrow, there is a reward annexed; so that we are assured, the tears of the true penitent shall not be spilt in vain. "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy."

Thus have I shewn you, the fruits or events of good actions: they that sow them will reap everlasting life.

But then in respect of evil actions, they that sow them shall reap accordingly. "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. The crop will be according to the seed. They have

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sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." And Solomon assures us, that " he that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity." And the prophet tells Isreal, that because they have plowed wickedness, therefore they have reaped the same. For the truth of this, Eliphaz appeals to his own experience. " Even, says he, as I have seen; they that plow iniquity and sow wickedness, reap the same." Not the same numerically, the same particular seed that the husbandman sows; not the same that shall be; but the same specifically: He shall reap the same in kind; the same wickedness in the issues and consequents; those curses, those treasures, that harvest of wrath that is threatened against it. It is not the sin itself which is replied, but the fruit or product of sin; and it is the punishment of sin, that is, the fruit of sin.

What I, and indeed we should all, observe from hence, is this; that men's punishments shall be proportioned according to their offences: as they sow, so shall they reap. Both temporal and eternal punishments are according to the quality of the sin committed. When sin is punished here in this world by the Almighty avenger, he often does it in the same kind; as many instances in scripture do sufficiently declare. Punishments do often bear the image and superscription of the sin upon them; so that by the judgement inflicted, we may interpret the wickedness committed.

This was openly confessed by Adonibezek—" As I have done so God hath requited me." Now what his fact was we may learn from Judges i. 7, threescore and ten kings having their thumbs and great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my
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table. And that he reaped the same doth appear from v. 6, where it is said of Judah and Simeon in their battle against the canaanites, that they pursued and caught Adonibezek, and cut off his thumbs and great toes. Thus we read of Nadab and Abihu, who offered strange fire; and were from Heaven destroyed by fire in a strange manner. A deluge of sin in the old world, was punished by an universal deluge of water. David had defiled his neighbour's wife—"Therefore, saith the Lord, I will take thy wives from before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour." Again he tells him, "thou hast slain Uriah the Hittite, with the sword of the children of Ammon; therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house." The Egyptians killed the Israelitish children: all their first born was destroyed in one night by the destroying angel. The very first law that was made and published after the fall, was a law of retaliation. "Whoso sheddeth mans blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The judicials of Moses are plain for this, as you may find it in Exodus, "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." To this purpose God tells the jews, that, "like as ye have forsaken me and served strange Gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours." Thus much the wise man also informs, Prov. xxi. 13. "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, and shall not be heard." The like we have in the first chapter, concerning the preaching of the word. "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets; saying, How long

long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity, and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh: when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer, they shall seek early, but they shall not find me." They would not hearken to the voice of the prophets, but despised their counsel, that was their sin: God will not hear nor regard them when they shall cry unto him in their affliction and misery; this shall be their punishment.

Now these punishments that I have been here speaking of, are but temporal, and not the full wages that the sinner shall receive; neither doth God always punish offenders after this manner; but only some few, for examples to others, and for the manifestation of his justice and providence. In the other world is the place where every wicked and impenitent sinner shall reap in a full measure what he hath sown; where their transgressions shall be punished according to their deserts. All the judgements of this life are far short of our sins, and much less than we deserve: but future punishments will be exactly proportionable; when infinite torments shall be inflicted upon sinners, who have committed sins against an infinite majesty, and offended an infinite justice; who have made light of the blessings of God toward mankind,

kind, and trampled under foot the price of their redemption, which is infinite.—For such as these, eternal misery will not be more than they deserve.

From what has been said upon this subject, there results an inference or two so natural and obvious, that I will just mention them, and so conclude.

First, From the apostle's admonition, *be not deceived*; learn we the deceitfulness of our own hearts; how prone we are to deceive and wrong ourselves, by extenuating and lessening our sins, and by making specious and plausible pretences for iniquity. How easily do we too often persuade ourselves, that we may omit such or such duties without danger; that we may defer our repentance till hereafter; that some sins are small and venial, of little or no consequence at all. How are we drawn aside to commit such or such sins upon the account of present pleasure or advantage! But, alas! All this while we deceive ourselves! Those short lived pleasures which we indulge ourselves in here; those advantages which we take by fraud, injustice, or oppression, will debar us from more lasting and durable riches, even those unspeakable pleasures which are at God's right hand.

Secondly, Is there no cheating or deluding of the Almighty? See we then, the great folly of hypocrites and of those profane wretches who make a mock at sin. What madness is it to pretend to be what we really are not, neither ever intend to be—To counterfeit piety and devotion—to feign ourselves righteous before God, when our
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hearts are full of deceit and wickedness? We may by these means perhaps deceive men, but God will not be mocked. For he sees the very bottom of all our hearts and understands all our secret thoughts and actions, which are hid from human inspection. And as for those that make a mock at sin, as if it were a light or trivial matter, and disregard the duties of christianity; let them consider that there will certainly come a time, when both piety and impiety will appear to be of great consequence; and that God will not be mocked in his laws, in which he hath commanded or forbidden. He that sitteth in the Heavens, will laugh at such scorers, and these despisers of his laws; the Lord will have them in derision.

Third and lastly, Is it so that at the last day we shall receive according to our works done in the flesh; Rewards or punishments as they are good or evil—That we shall reap even as we sow? Let this then press us to a care of our actions. They are seed that fall upon the ground, not to be lost, but to grow up again.—We shall hear of them in another world, and taste their fruits long after they have been committed. Let us therefore be careful how or what we sow.—This life is our seed time.—Here we sow the seeds of everlasting happiness or misery.—Let us therefore see that our seeds be good.—If we neglect the season or sow bad seed, we can expect no good crop.—We shall reap nothing but corruption; and our fruit will be, to be sentenced to everlasting burnings. But if we now make good use of our seed time, and break up our fallow ground, that we sow not among thorns,

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(as the prophet expresses it) if we prepare our soil, and sow the seeds of righteousness and holiness, we shall then reap a plentiful harvest, that will abundantly reward us—even eternal life; as the wise man hath it; the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life.

SERMON

SERMON X.

ON FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.

ACTS 16. v. xxxi.

And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

1. **A** Duty—believe.

2. The object of this faith—the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The end of this belief—the salvation of your souls!

We will comprise these three, in this one proposition; that the only way to obtain salvation is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. From this proposition, we shall consider first, what it is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.—Second, we will lay before you the means by which you are to obtain this faith.—And third, make some suitable application. Now, rightly to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ implies:—

First, A right knowledge of him: it is not a blind assent that we are to give; we must know what Christ is before we can venture our great and important concerns upon him.—We must take him to be the chiefest among ten thousand; and altogether lovely before our affections will be carried out after him. I know, says the great apostle, whom I have believed. And the blind man spoke very pertinently and rationally, in the conference between Christ and him; when Christ asked him —“dost

—“dost thou believe on the son of God?”—He answered and said—“who is he Lord, that I might believe in him?” True faith is never without knowledge; and though we find the whole of believing expressed by this one part in John—“this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” And again, the great apostle—“I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.” All the fundamental graces of christianity take their rise and beginning from this knowledge of Christ.—“The new man is renewed in knowledge.” The opening the eyes to behold own our deformity and Christ’s beauty, is the first work of the spirit. The old creation began in light, and so does the new. Faith is denominated by knowledge,—“by his knowledge shall my righteous servants justify many.” Faith is placed in the understanding, and in the will: it is properly a consent of the will, which cannot be without an assent of the understanding. Knowledge must go before faith, “that you may know and believe that I am he.” There can be no desires after Christ in a soul that is ignorant of him; but where there is a clear knowledge of Christ there will be an eager affection after him.

But though knowledge is requisite to faith, yet it is not every kind of knowledge that is fit for the purpose: it must be a true and a sound knowledge. As we are not to take up with a form of godliness, so neither are we to satisfy ourselves with a bare form of knowledge.—Thus we read of a form of knowledge, “that is nothing else but

an artificial speculation, a naked model of truth in the brain, which, like a winter's sun, shineth and warmeth not." Many have truths floating in their heads, which never affect their hearts. Many know Christ, for whom it had been better if they never had heard of him. But the knowledge of Christ which is implied in believing in him, is a serious and considerate knowledge. Faith is a spiritual prudence—it is opposed to folly as well as to ignorance. "O fools and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken." Faith draws to use and practice—it is a knowledge of consideration. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, would give unto you the spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of him. The knowledge of Christ, which is implied in true faith, is also transforming. Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image—from glory to glory! A right knowledge of Christ changes the soul, which is said to be renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. It is no true knowledge of Christ, if it doth not purify the heart. Hereby we know that we know him if we keep his commandments. He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. Many there are who taste of the tree of knowledge, who never taste of the tree of life. The best evidence we can give of our saving knowledge in Christ, is a ready and chearful obedience to his commandments. Thus then, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ implies—to have the soul truly enlightened with the knowledge of him.

Secondly, Rightly to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, implies a fiducial assent to him. We must believe that he is able to save to the uttermost.— That he came into the world to save even the chief of sinners. “ I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.” We must be fully persuaded, that the satisfaction which Christ has made, is every way sufficient to atone for us; that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin; and that by once offering up himself, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. We must be well assured that Christ is able and willing to save those who make application to him; and that those who come unto him, he will in no wise cast out. The soul that is not well assured of these things, will be loath to venture its all upon Christ. But the soul that is satisfied, there is merit enough in Christ's death to take away all its guilt; that there is beauty enough in the robe of Christ's righteousness, to hide all its deformity. This is the soul that will be ready to depend upon him, and to expect life, pardon, and salvation from him. This is that full assurance of faith, which the apostle makes mention of; in which we are to approach the throne of grace, in order to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need. And it is only when we are thus persuaded, that we shall draw nigh with a true heart, with right and sincere affections, and a firm trust grounded on the word of God. This persuasion must not be weak and wavering; for so are wicked men,

men sometimes, when they receive the word with joy.—But to be almost a christian will not do—the persuasion must be full and absolute, which determines the will and draws it after it; and views Christ as the only and sufficient means of salvation, and looks on him, as the way, the truth, and the life. Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, implies;—

Thirdly, A flying to him for pardon and justification. When once the sinner sees himself miserable, and is persuaded that there is no salvation in any other but Jesus Christ, and that this cannot be obtained without coming to Christ and being united to him; he will at once be ready to go out of himself; to renounce his own righteousness; and say with great boldness, in the Lord Jesus Christ have I righteousness and strength; a soul convinced of its own wants and misery, and at the same time, sensible of Christ's fulness; will be very desirous to come unto him and embrace him. Thus faith is represented in scripture, sometimes by coming to Christ. "Come unto me all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. "By whom also, we have access into this faith wherein we stand." "For by him we have access by one spirit unto the father." Sometimes it is set forth, by a longing for and desiring for God and Christ. "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." Sometimes it is represented, by hungering and thirsting after righteousness. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." "My soul is a thirst

thirst for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before him." "And let him that is athirst come." So again, "every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

It is also expressed by a fervent desire of enjoying God and Christ. An example of this we find in David; also in the prodigal son; who coming to himself and his right mind, and so seeing his misery, resolved upon a return; "I will arise and go to my father, and say unto him, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee." Thus also the good apostle expressed his desire of, and confidence in Christ and his righteousness. "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of Jesus Christ my Lord, that I may be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is by the faith of Christ."

Fourthly, To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, is, to receive him as he is offered on the terms of the gospel: when we not only seek and long after him, but also, receive and apprehend him when he is offered. God, out of mercy and free grace, offers his son; and Christ, out of love, offers himself to the sinful and contrite soul. He comes with all his favours and benefits, and waits for the soul's reception of him. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open unto me, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me. He communicate of my benefits and blessings to him, and he shall receive of my fulness, even grace for grace. This is the language

guage of the gospel, and the offers and invitations that are made to sinners. Now the soul that is fully persuaded of Christ's fulness—and that is flying to him for refuge—and firmly desiring communion with him—is willing to embrace this offer, and secure to himself this inestimable treasure. He is willing to sell all for this pearl of great price; to give up himself entirely to him; to rely wholly upon him; and to accept and receive him, as he is tendered to him. Thus we find in scripture, that the chief act of faith is signified by believing. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Again,

The soul that believes, must take Christ entirely and upon his own terms. And this must be in relation to the offices he bore; and so we must consider him as a prophet, a priest, and a king. We are of ourselves, blind, foolish and ignorant. Christ is to teach and instruct us in his ways, as our prophet. We are all exposed to God's wrath by the guilt of sin: Christ hath expiated our guilt as a priest, by once offering up himself in our stead. We are all under subjection to sin—Christ as a king is to set us free, and to subdue our lusts and corruptions: Thus every true believer is sensible of the guilt of sin, and accepts of Christ to satisfy for it: It sees the pollution of sin that it is stained with, and accepts of Christ to purge and cleanse it—it is also sensible of the power of indwelling corruption, and accepts of Christ to subdue and conquer it. And such a faith as this it is, that gives glory to God: for by receiving
Christ

Christ to satisfy for the guilt, it owns the justice of God, which hath been provoked.—By complying with the directions of Christ, it honours the holiness of God, which before it had vilified—and by bringing all our corruptions to be subdued by Christ's authority, it acknowledges the power and sovereignty of God, against which it had before rebelled. Thus doth it receive Christ upon his own terms, and eye him, in all his offices, as a prophet, a priest, and a king.

And thus have I endeavoured to lay before you, what it is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It implies—*first*, a right knowledge of him.—*Second*, A fiducial assent to him.—*Third*, A flying to him for pardon and justification.—And *fourth*, A receiving him as he is offered on the terms of the gospel. And blessed are they who thus believe on the Son of God; who was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto such shall he appear the second time without sin, unto salvation.

I come now to the second thing which I proposed, viz.—To lay before you the means whereby you may obtain that faith: And the first direction I would give you is, to be earnest and frequent in your addresses to the throne of grace. Faith is the gift of God.—“For by grace ye are saved through faith; and that, not of yourselves: It is the gift of God. It is a good and perfect gift which comes down from the Father of Light, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. It is he alone that can fulfil in you the whole pleasure of his goodness and power, which is the work of faith. Be earnest therefore,
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in your prayers to him, that he would give you that faith which worketh by love; and purifieth the soul: and be often making known your want of faith by prayer and supplication;—Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. Give not sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids till you have poured out your souls before God in some such expressions as these—Lord, give me faith, whereby I may be enabled to come to Christ. Give me Christ or I perish for ever. What profit is there in my blood? Why should I die in sight and presence of a saviour? Faith is thy own work, and a most glorious work it is—reveal thine own arm in this work upon my soul. Give me Christ, if thou deniest me bread—Give me faith, if thou deniest me breath. It is more necessary that I believe, than that I live. Thus be constant and fervent in your addresses to God, that he would bestow this inestimable gift upon you. Be not weary, nor give over till you have obtained it; but be often renewing your petitions upon this account; for if once you obtain it, it will overbalance all the cares you have been at about it. Strive therefore with God, wrestle with Jacob, and overcome with Israel—Resolve not to let God go, till he hath blessed you with this spiritual blessing, even faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Second, Be diligent in reading the word of God. This is a means God sometimes makes use of to convey faith into the soul. "Search the scriptures, says our blessed Lord, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of men." This is the way to get acquainted with
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Christ; to see his excellency, and to have our hearts raised to an admiration of his beauty.

Third, Embrace every opportunity of hearing God's word; for in this way God is often seen to make bare his arm; and begin the good work upon the soul. Thus we are expressly told, "that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Be constant then in your attendance upon the means of grace, in season and out of season; and frequent the place where God's word is preached. This is waiting at wisdom's gates, and at the posts of her doors; or, like lying at the pool of Bethesda, to wait for the moving of the spirit upon the face of the waters; and if you are found in the use and means that God hath appointed, you have reason to think that he will make them effectual to you, and teach you to profit by them.

The last direction I would give, and recommend to you, is serious and frequent meditation. Thus good David, when he had thought on his ways, was enabled to turn his feet unto God's testimony; nay, he then made haste, and delayed not, to keep his righteous judgements. Ponder the paths of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established, was the advice of wise Solomon. Examine seriously the state of your souls—think on what you are by nature, children of wrath; odious to God's holiness, and obnoxious to eternal misery. Think on the insufficiency of all things but one to save you. Christ can save you: duties cannot. There is no way but one; Christ, or condemnation for evermore. Think also upon the all-sufficiency of Christ to save you. If your souls are found interested in him, they can never be lost: if you cast
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anchor there, you will be sure to be safe. Hopes built upon Christ will never be frustrated—like a ship in the storm, it will keep the soul sure and steadfast.

Think upon the end and design upon which the Lord of glory came into this world and dwelt among us. It was to seek and to save lost and undone sinners. He laid down his life to make reconciliation between God and man, and he is the author of eternal salvation to all those who believe in and obey him.

I come now to make some application of what has been said. And is faith the only way of obtaining salvation? Then let me press you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that you may be saved. He is now tendered to you upon gospel terms;—here is Christ; here is life; here is pardon to you upon easy terms—what hinders you to be saved? Strike in with the offers of grace that are made to you—put not off the seasons of grace till another time—harden not your hearts against the offers of mercy, lest you come short of the promises as they did, to whom the gospel was preached in types, because they mixed not the word with faith.

See therefore that you refuse not God when he maketh you the greatest offer that can be made. How can you expect to escape if you neglect so great salvation. If they entered not into rest, because they believed not the gospel in types, how shall we be admitted into that rest, if we believe not a gospel in substance, stripped of all its obscuring shadows. And there could have been no remission unless Christ had shed his blood, so there is no participation of that blood, without applying it

it by faith. There are but two kingdoms, the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of Christ. Unbelief subjects us to the one, and faith places us in the other. There is no medium between these two; either by faith we are heirs of an everlasting kingdom, or else we are in subjection to the prince of the power of the air. We can perform no duties acceptably without faith. God smiles upon nothing, unless offered to him in the name of his son. Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, says the apostle; and who can offer any thing in his name who hath not faith in his blood! Without Christ we can do nothing.—Without union with him, which can be only caused by faith, whole heaps of sacrifices signify nothing. Faith must be the ground of all our obedience—no duty can be acceptable without it. This made Abel's sacrifice more acceptable than Cain's, and rendered it acceptable to God; whilst unbelief, rendered Cain's offering fruitless.

Embrace therefore the grace of the golden sceptre, lest ye be crushed by the weight of the iron rod. "Kiss the son, lest ye feel his wrath: for he that believeth on him hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Are there any of you that have fled for refuge to the hope set before you, and by faith laid hold on Jesus Christ? Admire the goodness and grace of God, that he hath enabled you to flee from the wrath to come—Adore the riches of his goodness and forbearance that he has waited so long to be gracious to you. Bless God, that he has not cut
you

you off in the midst of your refusal of his grace and mercy. Grieve that you stood out so long, and say, Lord it was too long before I believed on, and loved thee. And then, take care, lastly, that you walk as becometh the redeemed of the Lord. Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your bodies and spirits which are his. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Strive to add to your faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge, temperance, brotherly kindness, and charity—That these things being in you, and abounding, you may never be barren nor unfruitful in the works of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.—That, by growing in grace here, you may be fit for glory hereafter.—That you may go from strength to strength, as you do from duty to duty, till at last you appear before God in Zion, and there receive the end of your faith, even the complete salvation of your immortal souls.

SERMON XI.

ON PROMISES TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN CHRIST.

JOHN XX. 29.

Jesus saith unto him—Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed.—Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

HOW great advantage and how good effects there are of fraternal charity and christian society, may appear by the example of Thomas and the rest of the apostles; for neither did they cast him off for his incredulity, but tolerated him in their communion; nor did he separate from their fellowship, but continued therein as he had done before. And hence it came to pass, that through the goodness and grace of Christ, he saw him risen from the dead; and they likewise heard such a public and excellent confession of him; as none of them had made even to that day. Thomas answered and said, "my Lord and my God." Now upon this confession of Thomas, Christ delivers his judgement and censure. *Jesus saith unto him—Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed.—Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* In which words we may note two parts: first, a commendation—second, a correction.

In the first part Christ commends Thomas's faith.—*Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed.* That is, thou seest me a man; but considering how I am risen from the dead, thou believest in me as God.—

God.—Well; I commend thy faith; but it is but weak in respect of its rise. Now therefore to correct it, I pronounce those blessed to all generations, that when I am gone, in regard of my bodily presence, yet they will believe in me. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

Christ doth here approve the faith and confession of Thomas, allowing it that he was in the right, and that he had made a good confession. "It is well done, that thou hast thus believed and thus spoken." And hereby he demonstrates that he is truly God; for he would never have suffered the honour due unto his father to be unjustly taken from him, and transferred to himself, if he had not been of the same divine nature and co-equal.

But then again, Christ doth tacitly and obligingly reprove him, because he would not believe until he had seen, until he was convinced by ocular demonstration and the judgement of the senses. He commends his faith, but reprehends him for the slackness of it; that he needed to be drawn to it by sensible experiments. And therefore he adds, *blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*: extolling and preferring their faith which is grounded only on the word of God; and shewing that our faith is so much the more commendable when it is not founded upon sense and natural reason. The original words are of indefinite and indeterminate signification; and, after the manner of the Hebrew tongue, may be referred and extended to the time past, present, and to come: as thus—*blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*; or that do not, or shall not see, and yet do, or shall believe.

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But here it may be demanded, seeing Christ pronounced those blessed who have not seen, and yet have believed, whether Thomas was excluded from this blessedness, who did not believe before he saw? Answer, no. In this sentence Christ denies not Thomas to be blessed; but only preferreth those others before him in this regard, who have not seen him, and yet have believed. Though it was a great fault in Thomas that he believed not without seeing and touching, and an argument of the weakness of his faith; yet was his faith, notwithstanding, true and saving, and therefore rendered him blessed. They are surely blessed who see not, yet believe: but they are not blessed alone. Those that saw and believed, were blessed as well as those that see not and believe, though not so much as these. Christ's meaning here is comparative.—He apportions the blessing to faith. Both sorts are blessed; they that saw and did believe; and those that have not seen, and yet have believed; but these more than they, because their faith is greater than the others—of greater avail, because of greater merit—of greater merit, because by lesser means. As when Christ said, "blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it," Luke 11 28.—He doth not deny that to be true, which the woman had said, v. 27, "blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked." But he extolleth and preferreth their blessedness, who hear the word of God and keep it. So here, though he pronounces those blessed, who have not seen, and yet have believed: yet he denies not, but that those who have seen, and also believed, are blessed also. St. Peter is an instance—

stance—he confessed Christ; but he had seen him first: and Christ said unto him, “blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona!” Yea, our Saviour saith in general to all his disciples, “blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear.” Blessed, not because they saw; for then Judas had been blessed, but because they believed whom they saw. It was a greater blessing to hear Christ than to see him; and yet Mary was blessed, not so much for conceiving him within her womb, as for receiving him within her heart. This axiom of our Saviour is opposed to those who will not believe the preaching of the gospel and the word of God, but prefer the judgement of their own sense and reason before it; and will yield their assent to nothing more than what their own senses and understandings shall evidence unto themselves. Such as make their own sense and reason the measure and ground of their faith; these are excluded from this blessedness which is pronounced to those that see not, and yet believe.

And in this speech he obviates the cavils of unbelievers, requiring to see, that they may believe: implying, that it is vain to expect or require, that Christ should also appear to them as he had now done to Thomas. “This is given to thee, that I should appear to thee, to others it shall not be granted;” but it behoveth them to be contented with the word and preaching of the gospel. Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed; which shall hereafter believe through the preaching of the gospel, though they see me not in the flesh, or those wounds now shewed to thee. Christ commends
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the ministry of the word as the means of faith; he would not every day, or in every age, confirm the truth of his resurrection by new apparitions, and shew himself alive to every man, but chose his apostles to be witnesses of his resurrection and ascension, and shewed himself alive to them by many infallible proofs; that they might afterwards publish and attest it throughout the whole world. "Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead: and he commanded us to preach unto the people and to testify, that it is he who is ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead." The testimonies of the apostles and evangelists, which yet remain to us in their writings, and at this day found in our ears, in the preaching of the gospel, doth Christ here commend; affirming that they are and shall be blessed, who truly believe it though they see him not, nor touch him outwardly with the eyes and hands of the body, but spiritually only, with the eye and hand of faith.

We must not expect now to have any new revelations of Christ from Heaven, and sensible apparitions of his person; but we must hear his word, which is the means of begetting and increasing faith in him, and consequently of procuring blessedness to ourselves. For thus Christ prays for all them who shall believe on him through the word, that is, by the ministry and preaching of them and their successors. "neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on

me through their word." *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*—that is, whose faith is grounded upon the word of God, and not upon any sensible experiment, carnal judgement, or human understanding.

From this maxim of our saviour, it may seem, that the apostle takes that description of faith—"that it is the evidence of things not seen." The external object of faith is not seen, that is, it is not, cannot be comprehended by sense or reason; yet it is in the internal nature of it, an evidence, or convincing argument; and signifies a conviction, or undeniable proof. Such is faith, grounded upon the word of God, a demonstration or convincing proof, of that which appears not to sense or reason. Faith looks at the truth and authority of the speaker, and acquiesceth in the infallibility of his word, though beyond sense and reason.

The arguments which are drawn for the confirmation of our religion from miracles, the number of its martyrs, its admirable success, and consent of all its mysteries, and the correspondence it hath with reason, are all indeed powerful considerations, to make easy and familiar the actings of faith; but God's faithfulness and veracity, is the only proper motive of faith; his word is the sole ground of faith. And in this consists the main difference between faith and science. In arts and sciences, we do not give our assent to any thing till we have found its nature and causes; but in matters of faith, we first assent and believe God on his word, and then possibly we search after the reasons

reasons of the things we have believed: Not for our own satisfaction, to whom God's authority is foundation strong enough to build upon, but that we may be able and ready, to give an answer to every man that asks us a reason of our hope.

Sense and reason ought to submit to faith: whose evidence is above their contradiction. Faith, having the word of God asserting any thing, is sufficiently assured of it, though it be not seen with the eye, or touched with the hand, or comprehended by the understanding.

Sound faith is neither suspicious nor curious; it believes what God saith, without sight, without examination. For since it is impossible for God to lie, for how should truth be false, it is fit, that his word be credited for itself's sake. We must not examine how, or why, are these things so? That which the psalmist observes, of keeping the law, that must the christian say of receiving the gospel, "I made hast and delayed not to keep thy commandments. I disputed not, saith David, or I argued not." Faith reasons not with God; it moves no questions; but meekly yields assent, and saith Amen, to every word of God.

What the faculties of sense and reason cannot discover, and may look upon as doubtful, if not false; that faith, convinced by the word, accounts evident and certain. For understanding of which we must consider, that every thing is properly evident to that faculty, to which it doth belong: as sensible things are obvious to sense—rational conclusions are approved of by reason—and the things of God are in the sphere of faith. Now these

these three faculties, sense, reason, and faith, being all from one God (his works in man) cannot be contrary to one another; neither doth any one destroy the other; neither can any thing be true in one, which is false in another; if rightly understood. As for example: when reason dictates that nothing can be made out of nothing, and so would deny the creation; or, that when the privation is total, the habit cannot be introduced again; and from thence would deny the resurrection: faith doth not deny, but that these axioms, as to second causes, and in the lower orb of reason, are true; only it corrects their malignity by shewing a more excellent way; and bidding us look up unto God, unto whom all things are possible. So there is a subordination of these faculties, but no repugnance of them unto faith, if they be rightly used. And if they exalt themselves against the word of God, the rule of faith, they must be brought into captivity to the obedience of faith. So it must be in the mysteries of religion, "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," that is, are out of the reach of sense; "neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive," that is, exceed the capacity of man, without divine revelation.

Let us now apply this text to our own prophet:

First, This is a ground of comfort and strong consolation to us; viz. that those who have not seen Christ, and yet believe, shall be saved, as well as those who have seen him. It was the special prerogative of the apostles and other disciples of Christ, who lived in the same time and country with

with him, that they both saw and believed.—But though it hath pleased God, who hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of mens habitations, to cast our lot, into other ages and places, yet this is no impediment to our blessedness. It is said to have been one of the three things which St. Austin wished to have seen; Christ in the flesh. I shall not censure his opinion.—But I say, it is sufficient for our comfort, if we believe, though we have not seen him. For so saith Christ himself, *blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved,” saith St. Paul. Though thou hast not seen him with the eyes of thy body, yet if thou hast seen him with the eye of faith, if thou hast believed, O well is it with thee, and blessed shalt thou be.—So blessed as John, who lay in the bosom of Christ, whose head lay near his master’s heart.—So blessed as Joseph of Aramathea, who buried his body. So blessed as the Virgin Mary herself, who bare him in her womb; for she was more blessed in being the daughter than in being the mother of Christ; more blessed in believing in him, than in bearing of him.—So blessed as old Simeon, who clasped our Saviour in his arms. Let no man then say, O if I had lived in the times of Christ, and had seen his person and his miracles! Blessed are they says Christ, who have not seen and yet have believed.—Yea, by so much the more blessed, by how much the less they have seen. On this account

count St. Peter commends the faithful, saying—
 “that the trial of your faith, being more precious
 than of gold that perisheth, might be found unto
 praise and honour and glory at the appearing of
 Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in
 whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing,
 ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glo-
 ry.” It was not a matter of so great moment in
 the time of Christ, with the apostles to believe
 him who was seen and handled; but this is indeed
 a faith, precious and excellent, which believing in
 Christ, not seen, doth and suffereth all things
 for his name's sake, unmoveably depending upon
 his word alone, and undoubtedly expecting those
 things, which are neither seen nor present.

Secondly, Let us then exercise faith, and believe
 though we have not seen. That faith is kindest,
 which hath fewest helps; which is wholly and
 solely grounded on the word. To fly unto the
 eye, Christ calls it unbelief. Thomas is called
 faithless, because he will see, ere he will believe.
 Sight is love's sense, but not faith's. Faith
 comes by hearing, says the apostle, not by seeing.
 The ears are the doors of faith. As preaching is
 the door of the word, so hearing is the door of
 faith. Faith consists not in ocular inspection, but
 in a full assurance of the heart. Let us be con-
 tent to make faith our evidence, and to think
 God's word a sufficient ground of our most firm
 assent.

And if we look for certainty, where can we find
 it, if not with him, who neither deceives, nor can
 be deceived. Is not God's sole affirmation equi-
 valent

valent to all the several means, whereby knowledge is acquired? Is *and I saw it*, a clearer proof than *God said it*? If God be neither ignorant nor faithless, in what he affirms, thou art sure enough in believing his word.

And lest ye should be scandalized at believing, consider what confusion and disorder there would soon be in the world, if in human affairs, we should only go by science and believe nothing? We are forced in all worldly matters to act by a civil faith: and well may we then, in religious matters, think it not at all unbecoming us to be acted by a divine faith. Consider, Christ, the blessed object of faith, hath blessed faith; but a faithless faith. All true divine faith is blessed; but this most, which hath least helps. The less regard faith hath of sense and carnal reason, the more reward it hath of heavenly glory. "Though it have not seen Christ, yet it shall see him. The reward of believing him whom thou seest not, shall be to see him whom thou believest: in whose sight is fulness of glory. If thou now wilt believe what yet thou dost not see, thou shalt certainly see what now thou dost believe."

Lastly, Let us endeavour to have lives answerable to this grace of faith: this blessed grace, that denominating grace, whence all God's children are called believers. Let us demonstrate the truth and strength of our faith, by the purity of our lives. True faith will purify the heart and influence the conversation. As we believe that Christ is risen, let us seek those things that are above. Let our conversation be in Heaven,
whence

whence also we look for a saviour, the Lord Jesus, who shall change our vile body, that it may be like his glorious body.

I conclude with that notable saying of St. Bernard; "faith, faith he, tells us, there are unheard, unthought of blessings prepared—Oh, faith Hope, these are reserved for me—well faith Charity, or holy love, I'll run to them, and endeavour after them." To which I only add; blessed is that servant, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. *Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON XII.

ON DEATH.

DEUT. xxxii. 29.

Q that they were wise, that they understood this; that they would consider their latter end!

WITHOUT farther preface, I shall lay down this position as the foundation of my present discourse—That it is an act of the greatest wisdom, seriously to consider and timely to prepare for our latter end, or future state, after this life is ended.

What we are to consider in reference to our latter end;

—In what manner we are to prepare for it.

And, give the reasons why it is an act of great wisdom to do so.

Under the first head, the parts I shall mention are two. 1. That this latter end, this day of death will come one time or other.—2. That there is another state or condition of life to succeed, after this is ended.

And *first*, This is so certain, that we commonly say, nothing is so sure as death. The law of our mortality is like that of the Medes and Persians: it is not to be reversed or altered. The decree is gone forth upon all flesh; it is appointed to men, once to die. Abraham, the friend of God, must give up the ghost. Moses, the great favourite of Heaven, with whom God spake face to face, must at last ascend mount Nebo, and die there. David,

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a man

a man after God's own heart, must sleep with his father—be brought to the grave and see corruption. You will say, there need no instances to prove we all must die; because no man denies it—But that which I design by speaking of it, is, not to work in you a belief that so it is; but to bring you to a serious and devout consideration of it. For it is one thing to believe that we must die, and another to consider, lay it to heart, and apply it to ourselves. All the world believes it, but few, very few consider it as they ought: as God complains here of the Jewish people—*O that they were wise, that they would consider their latter end.* They knew very well that their latter end would come: they saw the carcases of their brethren drop every day in the wilderness, but yet they did not so consider it, as to make a proper application of it to themselves. And so it is at this day—People do not lay their latter end enough to heart. They see their neighbours, friends, and relations, die daily; but they do not consider nor reflect upon their own case, nor the day of their own death. You that are alive at this time, have attended several of your neighbours to the grave; men likely enough, and strong enough in man's judgement, to have out-lived most of us; and yet we see their latter end is come—they are gone to their long home the grave; never to return to this world more. Turn a thought how soon you may be brought thither yourselves, in the same manner, and to the same purpose; even to be laid up in your graves, till the general resurrection at the last day. And we should every one of us, reason thus—I that promise myself many days and
years

years to come, and put the evil day far off from me, have no more assurance of my life, than such or such an one had: one was as young, another as strong, another as brisk, lively and airy as myself; either of them as likely to live as I am. And behold they are not; they are gone out of the land of the living; they are departed this mortal life; and how soon I may follow them, is a secret not revealed to me.—God only knows it. In this, or such like manner, should we reason with ourselves on the death of others.

It is storied of the ancient Egyptians, that at their solemn feasts, they used to have one dish brought to their table with a death's head in it; to remind the guests of their mortality, and to restrain them from running into riot and excess. The moral certainly was very good, to have death and dissolution frequently in our thoughts, is certainly a very useful and necessary meditation. And that is the first particular. The second is, that there is another state or condition to succeed after this is ended. Though death puts an end to all our enjoyments in this world; yet it by no means puts an end to our existence. Our souls are immortal and die not.—They survive our bodies; when they die and fall to the ground, our souls still remain and live separate from them; and as for our bodies, though they see corruption, rot and putrify in the grave, yet by the providence and power of him that is Almighty, they shall be raised again, and re-united—bone to his bone, and flesh to his flesh.

The soul dies not, as I said above, but enters into this new state immediately on its dissolution
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from the body. And the body, though it must for some time lie in the dust, shall one day be raised out of it again, and re-united to the soul. I say, again, 'tis to be wished we would consider this; not only that we must die, but what is to follow after death; what our future state and condition is likely to be then.

To press this a little closer, and to move you to this most necessary and important consideration, give me leave to put you in mind of a two-fold state or condition after this life is ended.

First, a state of happiness and bliss—second, a state of misery and woe. Into one of those two states, the soul of every person enters after it goes out of the body; and in relation to both these, I shall take up the words of my text—*O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!* I shall briefly, but separately speak to both these.—First, it is to be wished, that people would consider that there is a state of happiness and bliss after this life; that there is a Heaven, a state of never ceasing joy and delight. Most persons will say they believe this: but what serious consideration do they show of it. Let us consider, how uncertain is our abode in this world; how surrounded we are with various perplexities and troubles. “Man that is born of a woman is but of few days: he cometh up, and is cut down as a flower: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.” Man is born to die; and as he cannot live long, so his short life is subject to many cares and troubles. He is compared to a flower which is beautiful, but suddenly cropt; or to the shadow on a dial, which never stands still, but is
hasting

hasting away apace. Consider this, I say, and consider withal, that there is another place, another state, which is neither uncertain nor troublesome—an unchangable state of eternal glory, prepared for all those who faithfully serve God in this present life. There is a continuing city—a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. And the foundations of this new Jerusalem are so strong, that no time nor change can move them. And therefore the apostle calls it, “an eternal house, a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.” See what a description St. John gives of it in his vision:—“her pavement is of gold, her gates pearl, and her walls of precious stones;” denoting the durability and permanency of the saints happiness; the delight and satisfaction that accompanies it, and the most resplendent glory of it. As gold excels all other metals, and is not subject to corruption; and as precious stones are very splendid and glorious to behold—in like manner will the mansions of Heaven be most glorious; and the conversation there, pure and incorrupt; affording the saints such an entire satisfaction, as infinitely excels all that the most rich and glorious things that this world can afford, for the satisfaction of the outward senses. What was said by the psalmist of Jerusalem of old, may be truly said of the Jerusalem above; “very excellent things are spoken of thee, thou city of God!” And yet, after all that is there or elsewhere spoken of the glory of Heaven, we must acknowledge it to be true, what the apostle says in another case, we know it but in part; and yet even that little that is discovered in scripture

ture of this happiness, does fill the souls of the saints and servants of God with infinite and unspeakable joy and consolation.

When St. Paul was caught up into the third Heaven, he knew not what was become of himself; whether he was in the body or out of the body.— And when St. Peter beheld but some few beams of this bliss and glory, at our Saviour's transfiguration upon Mount Tabor, he was so transported with amazement of joy, that he knew not what he said; but was so mightily ravished with the glory he beheld, that he earnestly desired to abide there still; and yet all that is discovered of this bliss, that can be, or ever shall be, is but a mere glimpse of it. We can more easily tell what this bliss is not, than what it is—what is not in Heaven, than what is there. There is no dying there, no mourning, nor hungering, nor thirsting; no infirmity, no sorrow, nor sadness there. What is there we know not; for neither hath ear heard, nor eye seen; nor can the heart, the mind, the cogitations of man conceive, the things which God hath there prepared for them that love him. In a word, this blissful state consists in the immediate vision of God himself, in whom is fullness of joy; and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

And now, is it not earnestly and devoutly to be wished, that people were so wise, as frequently and seriously to contemplate this place of happiness; which if they did, they would not so madly hazard and venture the loss of it, for every poor paltry gratification. The mischief of all is, we cannot bring people to think seriously of these matters;

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one follows one sinful course—another, another; as if the gratification of every base sordid lust was to be preferred to Heaven itself.

There is one state or condition to be seriously considered by us—the state of eternal bliss and happiness after this life is ended: and happy will it be for us, if we consider it as we ought. But secondly, there is another future state to be considered likewise—a state of woe and misery. If people will not be persuaded to forsake their evil ways, for Heaven and a state of eternal glory, they must be affrighted from them by the consideration of an hell, and a state of eternal misery.

Did wicked people now and then reflect, that the ways wherein they walk, will certainly lead them to that place of darkness and blackness and torment; they surely could not be so much in love with those sins, as will endanger the bringing them into that dreadful place. It was the petition of the rich man in hell, to Abraham, “I pray thee that thou wouldest send Lazarus to my father’s house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come to this place of torment.” He thought certainly, that if one should go from the other world, and tell his brethren of his miserable condition, they would directly repent and turn from their evil ways. No, says Abraham; “they have Moses and the prophets read very Sabbath day in their ears, let them hear them. Nay father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.” Now mind the answer. “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.” And all

all this proceeds from the inconsiderateness that is in many persons; they have no serious and fixed consideration of these things. They put the thoughts of Heaven and hell, as much out of their minds as they can. Whereas they should reason thus.—I have but a short time to live here, and when I go hence, I must enter upon a state either of happiness or misery.—Why then do I not look after that which so much concerns me; chuse the one, and avoid the other.

And this is the second part.—And here we should again take up the words of our text, and cry out, *O that they were wise!* That they would consider these two different states! The next thing I am to do, is to show you—

Secondly, How we are to prepare for this latter end. And this, by a certain expectation of it.—By endeavouring to free ourselves from whatever may make us unfit for it.—And by furnishing ourselves with such virtues and graces as may qualify ourselves for it. And,

First, My life is measured but by days.—My time in this world is appointed.—There is a secret determinate term of my life sealed up by the Almighty. A change will assuredly come; death will seize me, I know not how soon: therefore all the days of my time will I wait, and pass all my life, in a certain expectation of my death and dissolution.

In all the main occurrences of life, we should think and say within ourselves, thus—well, though it be thus or thus with me now, yet I must die.—Though my bones are full of marrow yet I must lay them down in the dust.—Though riches in-
crease

crease and flow in upon me, I must begone and leave them to others. I have no abiding here; I am but a stranger and sojourner as all my fathers were; I must not, cannot enjoy wife or children, friends or relations, houses or lands, or any earthly comforts forever. Thus must we prepare for it, by a continual expectation of it. Again, we should—

Secondly, Free ourselves from what may make us unfit to die. This in the general is sin, that puts a sting into death. The soul which no weapon can reach, sin can wound. 'Tis sin that makes death terrible, and us unfit and unable to encounter it. Lay aside, says the apostle, every weight, and the sin that so easily besets you, and run with patience, the race that is set before you. I shall therefore only add a few words, by way of inference, and so conclude.

And here give me leave to advise you in the words of God himself to Hezekiah; "set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." You must all die one time or other, as sure as you are now alive. Set your houses therefore in order, because you know not how soon this message may be sent unto you. And in the doing of this, begin with the inner house, your souls: be sure you make them your greatest care and concern, that they may be ready swept, and garnished.

And let it also be particularly observed, that some time or other, before a man goes out of this world, it is highly requisite that he should settle his affairs in it, and endeavour to lay such a foundation, that his children or relations may have reason to bless his memory: and the sooner this

very important point is set about, the better: because it may sometimes require such judgement and discretion, as may not be very consistent with the distractions and agonies of sickness or a death bed.

God seems of late to have entered into a controversy with us, and has sent diseases among us, which have cut off some and endangered others. No here man can assure himself, that his turn shall not be next.

O that we were wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter end! Which God grant, for his Son Jesus Christ's sake. *Amen.*

A sincere wish and hearty prayer of a most grateful and absent friend JOHN PEARSON, Chaplain H. M. S. *Ramilies*, to his benevolent and generous Friends.

*May you all live in Love, die in Peace, rest in Hope,
and rise in Glory.*

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